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THE COMEDY
OF
A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S
DREAM

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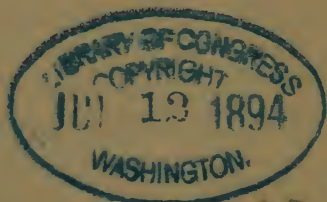
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

THE COMEDY
OF
A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S
DREAM

BY
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
" "



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AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY

1894

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MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM.

Printed by
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New York, U. S. A.

INTRODUCTION.

THAT all of Shakespeare's dramas were written and on the stage long before they were printed is well known, but the precise date of the composition of any of them is a matter of conjecture, and fortunately is of no real importance to the general reader.

"A Midsummer-Night's Dream" was produced as early as 1598—probably much earlier—but its first publication was in 1600, in which year two quarto editions were issued, being the only editions published previous to its appearance in the famous "First Folio," a collection of the poet's plays printed in 1623, seven years after his death.

As to the sources of the plot of this comedy, it cannot be said that Shakespeare found them either in Chaucer or Plutarch, though it is likely he had the "Knight's Tale" of the former, and Plutarch's "Theseus," in his mind when writing the play; and he was probably indebted to Chaucer's "Thisbe of Babylon" for the Pyramus and Thisbe of the interlude. But it was from the homely English folklore that his creative fancy produced this lyrical drama, giving to the "airy nothings" of its fairy scenes dramatic form and interest, and to English literature some of the most delightful and fascinating poetry in the language.

The play opens in the palace of Theseus, Duke of Athens,

but the scene of action of its main incidents is in a wood near the city. Egeus, accompanied by his daughter Hermia, Lysander, and Demetrius, comes with complaint against his child, whose heart Lysander has gained, while Demetrius has the father's consent to marry her. Egeus claims the privilege of the law of Athens to constrain his daughter's choice. Lysander pleads that he is as well derived as his rival, his fortunes as good, his love greater, and that Demetrius has won the soul of old Nedar's daughter Helena, who still devoutly dotes on this inconstant man. But Theseus warns Hermia that she must submit to her father's will or suffer the penalty, which is death or perpetual seclusion from the society of men. He allows her till the next new moon, when his nuptials with Hippolyta, the queen of the Amazons, are to be celebrated, to make her election.

The lovers being left alone, Lysander proposes that they fly to the home of his dowager aunt, seven leagues distant, where the Athenian law does not prevail, and there be married. In furtherance of this design, Hermia is to steal from her father's house and join her lover in the wood "to-morrow night." As they are going out, Helena, who it seems is an intimate friend of Hermia, meets them, and they disclose to her the plan of their intended flight. This she determines to betray to Demetrius, believing that he will be apt to seek them in the wood, where she by following may have sight of him.

In the next scene we are at Quince's house in Athens, where he and other mechanics are arranging the cast of a play which they intend to present "before the duke and the duchess, on his wedding day at night." There is much trouble with Nick Bottom, the weaver, who, though the leading rôle is assigned to him, thinks each part as named and described the one for which he is

peculiarly fitted. He is finally pacified however ; the cast is adjusted, and they adjourn to meet the next night at the wood, where they may rehearse their parts with more privacy and freedom than in the city.

Act II. introduces Oberon and Titania, king and queen of the fairies, who with their respective trains "are tarrying in this wood," and are come from "the farthest steppe of India" to do honor to the wedding of Theseus and his Amazon queen. But the royal elves are just now quarreling over the possession of a "little changeling boy," which Oberon claims and Titania refuses to surrender. Oberon, provoked, determines to punish her obstinacy, and sends Puck, one of his attendants—and a very mischievous elf withal—to fetch a certain flower the juice of which,

"On sleeping eyelids laid,
Will make or man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees,
.
.
.
Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
On meddling monkey, or on busy ape."

With this he means to anoint Titania's eyes. While Puck is away, Demetrius, followed by Helena, comes in, and Oberon, invisible, overhears her entreaties and Demetrius' rude rejection of her love, and resolves to charm him to renew his affection for the "sweet Athenian lady." Puck returns with the flower, and Oberon, after squeezing a portion of the juice on the eyes of the sleeping Titania, sends Puck to do the same with Demetrius, whom he will know "by the Athenian garments he hath on," charging him to be careful in applying the charm that the next thing the youth may see shall be the "despised Athenian maid."

In the mean time Lysander and Hermia have come to their trysting place, and, wearied with the long walk, have fallen asleep. Puck, looking for Demetrius, mistakes Lysander for that youth, and charms the true lover's eyes, who, awaking at the moment Helena passes, still pursuing Demetrius, follows her with passionate protestations of love, leaving Hermia sleeping. Hermia, starting suddenly from a frightful dream, calls for Lysander, and, having no reply, runs off in great distress in search of him.

In Act III. we come upon Quince and his company rehearsing their play in the wood. Puck, indignant at the intrusion of these "hempen homespuns" on the haunts of the fairies, and so near the cradle of their queen, takes occasion when Bottom is separated for a moment from his companions to fasten an ass's head on his shoulders. He, unconscious of his transformation, returns to his fellows: they, terrified by the apparition, take to their heels, crying out to Bottom that he is "translated," and leaving him to soliloquize on the knavish trick they are playing to make him afraid. To show that he is not afraid he attempts to sing, which awakens Titania, who is immediately enamored of the monster, fondles his long ears, wreathes them with flowers, and bids her tiny pages, Peaseblossom, Mustardseed, and the rest, "nod to him and do him courtesies."

In the following scene Puck is relating to Oberon the events of the night, when Hermia and Demetrius enter, he ardent in his professions of love, and Hermia, who has failed to find Lysander, accusing Demetrius, in angry and scornful words, of the murder of her lover. This Demetrius denies, but, seeing that it would be vain to follow Hermia in her violent humor, lies down and is soon asleep. Oberon discovers by their conversation

the mistake that Puck has made in using the magic balsam, and dispatches him to find Helena. Oberon now smears Demetrius' eyes with the potent essence. Demetrius, waking as Puck comes in with Helena whom Lysander is still following, addresses her with fervent vows of love. Now Hermia, hearing Lysander's voice, returns, and making some remark which induces Helena to believe that they are all in conspiracy to mock and annoy her, a fierce quarrel arises between Hermia and herself, while Demetrius and Lysander, each claiming Helena's love, withdraw to settle their jealous rivalry at the sword's point. But Puck, by Oberon's direction, overcasts the night with "drooping fog as black as Acheron," and then, by imitating now the voice of Demetrius and now that of Lysander, leads them a tangled round in fruitless search of each other, till, tired out, they fall asleep. Hermia and Helena, severally wandering in the darkness, come in exhausted, and also fall down and sleep. Puck, appearing, purges Lysander's eyes with a countercharm, that, waking and spying Hermia, all his love for her shall return.

In Act IV., Oberon, having obtained from Titania the "changeling boy," removes the spell that causes her infatuation for Bottom; and Puck, while the lubber is sleeping, relieves him of the ass's head. Bottom, waking bewildered as from a dream, goes in quest of his associates, who, assembled at Quince's house lamenting his transformation and the consequent failure of their play, are vociferous in their joy when he makes his appearance in his own proper person. Bottom says he has had a wonderful dream, but will tell them no word about it. He lets them know, however, that their play is chosen, that they must meet presently at the palace, and charges them "to eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath."

Again at the wood: Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus, and attendants are come in the early morning prepared to hunt in the forest. The noise of horns and hounds arouses the lovers whom we left sleeping. Theseus meeting them, Lysander and Demetrius recount the adventures of the night. Egeus, enraged by the attempted flight of Lysander with his daughter, demands the law upon his head; but Theseus overbears his will. The purposed hunt is abandoned, and as this is the day fixed for the nuptials of Theseus and Hippolyta, when their marriage is solemnized in the temple, Demetrius weds Helena, and Lysander weds Hermia. The play ends with the presentation of the interlude, ludicrously enough, by the "hard-handed men" of Athens, but it is graciously received by Theseus.

At the conclusion of the comedy, it being "fairy time," Oberon and Titania with their airy trains reappear, and chant a nuptial song, dancing

"Hand in hand, with fairy grace."

Professor Dowden ("Shakespeare"), commenting on this play, remarks: "'A Midsummer-Night's Dream' is a strange and beautiful web woven delicately by a youthful poet's fancy. What is perhaps most remarkable about the play is the harmonious blending in it of widely different elements. . . . In North's 'Plutarch' or in Chaucer's 'Knight's Tale,' Shakespeare may have found the figures of Theseus and his Amazonian bride; from Chaucer also ('Wife of Bath's Tale') may have come the figure of the elf queen (though not her name, Titania) and the story of Pyramus and Thisbe (see Chaucer's 'Legend of Good Women'): this last, however, was perhaps taken from Golding's translation of Ovid's 'Metamorphoses.' Oberon, the

fairy king, had recently appeared in Greene's play 'The Scottish History of James IV.' Puck, under his name of Robin Good-fellow, was a roguish sprite well known in English fairy lore. Finally, in Montemayor's 'Diana,' which Shakespeare had made acquaintance with, occur some incidents which may have suggested the magic effects of the flower juice laid upon the sleeping lovers' lids. Taking a little from this quarter and a little from that, Shakespeare created out of such slight materials his marvelous 'Dream.' The marriage of Duke Theseus and Hippolyta—who are classical in name only, being in reality romantic mediæval figures—surrounds the whole, as it were, with a magnificent frame. Theseus is Shakespeare's early ideal of a heroic warrior and man of action. His life is one of splendid achievement and joy, his love is a kind of happy victory, his marriage a triumph. From early morning, when his hounds—themselves heroic creatures—fill the valley with their 'musical confusion,' until midnight, when the Athenian clowns end their very tragical mirth with a Bergomask dance, Theseus displays his joyous energy and the graciousness of power. In contrast with him and his warrior bride the figures of the young lovers look slight and graceful, and their love perplexities and errors are seen to be among the minor and remediable afflictions of the world. Shakespeare was not interested in making much distinction between Demetrius and Lysander; they are little more than a first lover and a second lover. Nor is Helena distinguishable from Hermia by much else than that in person she is the taller of the two, and the gentler in disposition. Where there are so many contrasts, the play can admit, and perhaps needs, some uniformities. . . . As the two extremes of exquisite delicacy, of dainty elegance, and on the other hand of thick-witted grossness and clumsiness,

stand the fairy tribe and the group of Athenian handicraftsmen. The world of the poet's 'Dream' includes the two—a Titania and a Bottom, the weaver—and can bring them into grotesque conjunction. No such fairy poetry existed in English literature before Shakespeare. The tiny elves, to whom a cowslip is tall, for whom the third part of a minute is an important division of time, have a miniature perfection which is charming. They delight in all beautiful and dainty things, and war with things that creep and things that fly if they be uncomely; their lives are gay with fine frolic and delicate revelry. Puck, the jester of fairyland, stands apart from the rest, the recognizable 'lob of spirits,' a rough 'fawn-faced, shock-pated little fellow, a very Shetlander among the gossamer-winged, dainty-limbed shapes around him.'

"The rehearsing of their play and its performance before the Duke afford a happy occasion for grouping together the carpenter, the tinker, the bellows mender, and their fellows who have turned actors for the nonce. Bottom in his broad-blown self-importance, his all but impenetrable self-satisfaction, stands a head and shoulders higher in absurdity than any other comic personage in Shakespeare's early plays. He is the admitted king of his company, the cock of his walk, and he has a consciousness that his gifts are more than equal to his opportunities. When the ass's head is on his shoulders it seems hardly a disguise, so naturally does the human asinine seem to come to Bottom; nor is he more embarrassed in offering to Duke Theseus his explanations of the play. This comedy of the Athenian handicraftsmen, it should be noted, is an indirect answer to any objections which might be brought against Shakespeare's attempt to represent the fairy world, and the world of classical romance, which could be

so ill set visibly before the spectators of an Elizabethan theater. In 'Pyramus and Thisbe' an actual man with a lantern stands for the moon; another represents wall with plaster on his fingers. Bottom and his crew assume that the spectators have no imaginations: Shakespeare in his fairy 'Dream' assumes that they can imagine as poetically real anything beautiful or grotesque which the poet suggests to them.

"The action of the play is comprised within three days, ending at twelve o'clock on the night of May Day. The notes of time given in the opening lines are inconsistent with this statement, but the inconsistency is Shakespeare's own."

Dr. Nathan Drake ("Shakespeare and His Times") has this notice of the fairies of this play: "The fairies of Shakespeare have been truly denominated the favorite children of his romantic fancy, and perhaps in no part of his works has he exhibited a more creative and visionary pencil or a finer tone of enthusiasm than in bodying forth these 'airy nothings,' and giving them in brighter and ever-durable tints once more 'a local habitation and a name.' Of his unlimited sway over this delightful world of ideal forms no stronger proof can be given than that he has imparted an entire new cast of character to the beings he has evoked from its bosom, purposely omitting the darker shades of their character, and whilst throwing around them a flood of light, playful yet exquisitely soft and tender, endowing them with the moral attributes of purity and benevolence. In fact, he not only dismisses altogether the fairies of malignant nature, but clothes the milder yet mixed tribe of his predecessors with a more fascinating spontaneousness and with a much larger share of unalloyed goodness. . . .

“Such, in fact, has been the success of our bard in expanding and coloring the germs of Gothic fairyism, in assigning to its tiny agents new attributes and power, and in clothing their ministration with the most light and exquisite imagery, that his portraits, in all their essential parts, have descended to us as indissolubly connected with, and indeed nearly if not altogether forming, our ideas of the fairy tribe.”

Verplanck (Introduction to “*A Midsummer-Night’s Dream*”), in a general criticism of the play, observes: “This is in several respects the most remarkable composition of its author, and has probably contributed more to his general fame, as it has given a more peculiar evidence of the variety and brilliancy of his genius, than any other of his dramas. Not that it is in itself the noblest of his works, or even one of the highest order among them; but it is not only exquisite of its kind, it is also original and peculiar in its whole character, and of a class by itself. . . . For ‘*The Tempest*,’ which it resembles in its preternatural personages and machinery of the plot, is in other respects wholly dissimilar, is of quite another mood in feeling and thought, and with, perhaps, higher attributes of genius, wants its peculiar fascination. Thus it is that the loss of this singularly beautiful production would, more than that of any other of his works, have abridged the measure of its author’s fame, as it would have left us without the means of forming any estimate of the brilliant lightness of his ‘forgetive’ fancy in its most sportive and luxuriant vein. The poet and his contemporaries seem to have regarded this piece, as they well might, as in some sort a nondescript in dramatic literature, for it happens that, while the other plays published during the author’s life are regularly denominated in

their title-page as 'the pleasant comedy,' 'the true dramatic history,' or 'the lamentable tragedy,' this has no designation of the kind beyond the mere title in either of the original editions. It has, in common with all his comedies, a perpetual intermixture of the essentially poetical with the purely laughable, yet it is distinguished from all the rest by being (as Coleridge has happily defined its character) 'one continued specimen of the dramatized lyrical.' Its transitions are as rapid, and the images and scenes it presents to the imagination as unexpected and as remote from each other, as those of the boldest lyric, while it has also that highest perfection of the lyric art, the pervading unity of the poetic spirit, that continued glow of excited thought, which blends the whole rich and strange variety in one common effect of gay and dazzling brilliancy.

"There is the heroic magnificence of the princely loves of Theseus and his Amazon bride, dazzling with the strangely gorgeous mixture of classical allusion and fable with the taste, feelings, and manners of chivalry; and all embodied in a calm and lofty poetry, fitted alike to express the grand simplicity of primeval heroism and 'the high thoughts in a heart of courtesy,' which belong to the best parts of the chivalrous character. This is intertwined with the ingeniously perplexed fancies and errors of the Athenian lovers, wrought up with a luxuriant profusion of quaint conceits and artificial turns of thought, such as the age delighted in. The fairy king and queen, equally essential to the plot, are invested with a certain mythological dignity, suited to the solemn yet free music of the verse, and the elevation and grave elegance of all their thoughts and images. Their fairy subjects, again, are the gayest and most fantastic of Fancy's children. All these are relieved and contrasted by the grotesque

absurdity of the mock play, and still more by the laughable truth and nature of the amateur 'mechanicals' who present it. . . .

"This clustering of the sweetest flowers of fancy and of heroic poetry around the grotesque yet substantial reality of Bottom and his associates, gives to the whole play that mixed effect of the grotesquely ludicrous with the irregularly beautiful which the poet himself has painted in his picture of Titania 'rounding the hairy temples' of the self-satisfied fool

"With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers."

"All this profusion of pure poetry and dull reality is worked up with the dramatic skill of a practiced artist in embodying these apparently discordant plots and personages into one perfectly connected and harmonious whole, out of which nothing could well be removed without injury to the rest."

A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM.

PERSONS OF THE PLAY.

| | |
|---|--|
| THESEUS, <i>Duke of Athens.</i> | HERMIA, <i>daughter to Egeus, in love with Lysander.</i> |
| EGEUS, <i>father of Hermia.</i> | HELENA, <i>in love with Demetrius.</i> |
| LYSANDER, } <i>in love with Hermia.</i> | |
| DEMETRIUS, } | |
| PHILOSTRATE, <i>master of the revels to Theseus.</i> | OBERON, <i>king of the fairies.</i> |
| QUINCE, <i>a carpenter.</i> | TITANIA, <i>queen of the fairies.</i> |
| SNUG, <i>a joiner.</i> | PUCK, <i>or Robin Goodfellow.</i> |
| BOTTOM, <i>a weaver.</i> | PEASEBLOSSOM, } |
| FLUTE, <i>a bellows mender.</i> | COBWEB, } <i>fairies.</i> |
| SNOUT, <i>a tinker.</i> | MOTH, } |
| STARVELING, <i>a tailor.</i> | MUSTARDSEED, } |
| HIPPOLYTA, <i>Queen of the Amazons, betrothed to Theseus.</i> | Other fairies attending their king and queen. |
| | Attendants on Theseus and Hippolyta. |

SCENE: *Athens, and a wood near it.*

ACT I.

SCENE I. *Athens. The Palace of Theseus.*

Enter THESEUS,¹ HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, and Attendants.

Theseus. Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
Draws on apace; four happy days bring in
Another moon: but, O, methinks, how slow

¹ Theseus, a famous legendary hero of Greece, was the son of Egeus, king of Athens. One of his adventures was an excursion into the land of the Amazons—a formidable community of warrior women—from whence he brought back Hippolyta, whom he married. Or, according to another tradition, it was Antiope, their queen, whom he captured; and the Amazons, under pretext of rescuing her, invaded Attica, led by Hippolyta, whom Theseus took prisoner, and afterwards married.

This old moon wanes! she lingers my desires,
 Like to a stepdame or a dowager
 Long withering out a young man's revenue.¹

Hippolyta. Four days will quickly steep themselves in night;
 Four nights will quickly dream away the time;
 And then the moon, like to a silver bow
 New bent in heaven, shall behold the night
 Of our solemnities.

Theseus. Go, Philostrate,
 Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments;
 Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth:
 Turn melancholy forth to funerals;
 The pale companion is not for our pomp. [*Exit Philostrate.*]
Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,
 And won thy love, doing thee injuries;
 But I will wed thee in another key,
 With pomp, with triumph,² and with reveling.

Enter EGEUS, HERMIA, LYSANDER, and DEMETRIUS.

Egeus. Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke!

Theseus. Thanks, good Egeus:³ what's the news with thee?

Egeus. Full of vexation come I, with complaint
 Against my child, my daughter Hermia.—
 Stand forth, Demetrius.—My noble lord,
 This man hath my consent to marry her.—
 Stand forth, Lysander:—and, my gracious duke,
 This hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child:—
 Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,
 And interchang'd love tokens with my child:

¹ "Like to a," etc. "The picture here is of a widow who for long years keeps the heir out of possession of that portion of his father's property to a life interest in which she is entitled as her dower, and which will be his at her death."

² "With pomp, with triumph," i.e., with public shows and pageantry.

³ Pronounced *E-gé-us*.

Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung
With feigning voice verses of feigning love,
And stolen the impression of her fantasy
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawds, conceits,
Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats,— messengers
Of strong prevailment in unhardened youth :
With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart,
Turn'd her obedience, which is due to me,
To stubborn harshness :— and, my gracious duke,
Be it so she will not here before your grace
Consent to marry with Demetrius,
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,
As she is mine, I may dispose of her :
Which shall be either to this gentleman
Or to her death, according to our law
Immediately¹ provided in that case.

Theseus. What say you, Hermia? be advis'd,² fair maid :
To you your father should be as a god ;
One that compos'd your beauties, yea, and one
To whom you are but as a form in wax
By him imprinted and within his power
To leave the figure or disfigure it.
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

Hermia. So is Lysander.

Theseus. In himself he is ;
But in this kind, wanting your father's voice,³
The other must be held the worthier.

Hermia. I would my father look'd but with my eyes.

Theseus. Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.

Hermia. I do entreat your grace to pardon me.
I know not by what power I am made bold,
Nor how it may concern my modesty,

¹ Specially. ² "Be advised," i.e., consider well.

³ "But in this," etc., i.e., but in this matter, lacking your father's approval.

In such a presence here to plead my thoughts ;
But I beseech your grace that I may know
The worst that may befall me in this case,
If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

Theseus. Either to die the death or to abjure
Forever the society of men.
Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires ;
Know of your youth, examine well your blood,
Whether if you yield not to your father's choice,
You can endure the livery of a nun,
For aye¹ to be in shady cloister mew'd,²
To live a barren sister all your life,
Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.
Thrice blessed they that master so their blood,
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage ;
But earthlier happy is the rose distill'd,
Than that which withering on the virgin thorn
Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.

Hermia. So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,
Ere I will yield my virgin patent up
Unto his lordship,³ whose unwished yoke
My soul consents not to give sovereignty.

Theseus. Take time to pause ; and, by the next new moon —
The sealing day betwixt my love and me
For everlasting bond of fellowship —
Upon that day either prepare to die
For disobedience to your father's will,
Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would ;
Or on Diana's⁴ altar to protest
For aye austerity and single life.

¹ Ever.

² Confined.

³ Government.

⁴ Diana, daughter of Jupiter, was not only goddess of the moon, but also of the chase. As soon as she had been introduced in Olympus, all the gods expressed a wish to marry her ; but she refused to listen to their entreaties,

Demetrius. Relent, sweet Hermia :—and, Lysander, yield
Thy crazed title to my certain right.

Lysander. You have her father's love, Demetrius ;
Let me have Hermia's : do you marry him.

Egeus. Scornful Lysander ! true, he hath my love,
And what is mine my love shall render him ;
And she is mine, and all my right of her
I do estate¹ unto Demetrius.

Lysander. I am, my lord, as well deriv'd as he,
As well possess'd ; my love is more than his ;
My fortunes every way as fairly rank'd,
If not with vantage, as Demetrius' ;
And, which is more than all these boasts can be,
I am belov'd of beauteous Hermia :
Why should not I then prosecute my right ?
Demetrius, I'll avouch it to his head,
Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,
And won her soul ; and she, sweet lady, dotes,
Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry,
Upon this spotted² and inconstant man.

Theseus. I must confess that I have heard so much,
And with Demetrius thought to have spoke thereof ;
But, being overfull of self-affairs,
My mind did lose it. — But, Demetrius, come ;—
And come, Egeus ; you shall go with me,
I have some private schooling for you both. —
For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself
To fit your fancies to your father's will ;
Or else the law of Athens yields you up—
Which by no means we may extenuate—
To death, or to a vow of single life. —

begged her father's permission to remain single all her life, and pleaded her cause so ably that Jupiter was forced to grant her request. (See Guerber's *Myths of Greece and Rome*.)

¹ Transfer.

² Perjured ; treacherous.

Come, my Hippolyta : what cheer, my love ? —
 Demetrius and Egeus, go along :
 I must employ you in some business
 Against our nuptial, and confer with you
 Of something nearly that concerns yourselves.

Egeus. With duty and desire we follow you.

[*Exeunt all but Lysander and Hermia.*

Lysander. How now, my love ! why is your cheek so pale ?
 How chance the roses there do fade so fast ?

Hermia. Belike¹ for want of rain, which I could well
 Beteem² them from the tempest of my eyes.

Lysander. Ay me ! for aught that I could ever read,
 Could ever hear by tale or history,
 The course of true love never did run smooth ;
 But, either it was different in blood, —

Hermia. O cross ! too high to be enthrall'd to low.

Lysander. Or else misgrafted³ in respect of years, —

Hermia. O spite ! too old to be engag'd to young.

Lysander. Or else it stood upon the choice of friends, —

Hermia. O hell ! to choose love by another's eyes.

Lysander. Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,
 War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,
 Making it momentary⁴ as a sound,
 Swift as a shadow, short as any dream ;
 Brief as the lightning in the collied⁵ night,
 That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,
 And ere a man hath power to say " Behold ! "
 The jaws of darkness do devour it up :
 So quick bright things come to confusion.

Hermia. If then true lovers have been ever cross'd,
 It stands as an edict' in destiny :
 Then let us teach our trial patience,

¹ Perhaps.

² Yield.

³ Misgrafted ; unmatched.

⁴ Momentary.

⁵ Darkened.

Because it is a customary cross,
As due to love as thoughts and dreams and sighs,
Wishes and tears, poor fancy's followers.¹

Lysander. A good persuasion: therefore, hear me, Hermia.
I have a widow aunt, a dowager
Of great reven'ue, and she hath no child:
From Athens is her house remote seven leagues;
And she respects me as her only son.
There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee;
And to that place the sharp Athenian law
Cannot pursue us. If thou lov'st me then,
Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night;
And in the wood, a league without the town,
Where I did meet thee once with Helena,
To do observance to a morn of May,²
There will I stay for thee.

Hermia. My good Lysander!
I swear to thee, by Cupid's strongest bow,
By his best arrow with the golden head,³
By the simplicity of Venus' doves,⁴
By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves,
And by that fire which burn'd the Carthage queen,⁵
When the false Trojan under sail was seen,

¹ "Fancy's followers," i.e., love's attendants.

2 "To do observance," etc. The observance of the Festival of May was general in England. Every village had its Maypole painted in gay colors, around which the villagers danced and sung in their May festivities. Young folks of both sexes would rise early on May Day morning, and, trooping to some neighboring wood, gather branches and wild flowers; and returning home about sunrise, decorate their doors and windows with their flowery spoils.

³ Mythologists tell us that Cupid is armed with arrows of two kinds; the one, of gold, causing love, the other, of lead, repelling it.

⁴ Venus is represented in a chariot drawn by doves. Sparrows and swans are also favorites of the goddess of love.

⁵ Dido, who immolated herself on a funeral pyre when deserted by Æneas. (See Guerber.)

By all the vows that ever men have broke,
In number more than ever women spoke,
In that same place thou hast appointed me,
To-morrow truly will I meet with thee.

Lysander. Keep promise, love. Look, here comes Helena.

Enter HELENA.

Hermia. God speed fair Helena! whither away?

Helena. Call you me fair? that fair again unsay.
Demetrius loves your fair: O happy fair!
Your eyes are lodestars; and your tongue's sweet air
More tunable than lark to shepherd's ear,
When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.
Sickness is catching: O, were favor¹ so,
Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go;
My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye,
My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.
Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated,
The rest I'll give to be to you translated.²
O, teach me how you look, and with what art
You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart.

Hermia. I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.

Helena. O that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill!

Hermia. I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

Helena. O that my prayers could such affection move!

Hermia. The more I hate, the more he follows me.

Helena. The more I love, the more he hateth me.

Hermia. His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine.

Helena. None, but your beauty: would that fault were mine!

Hermia. Take comfort: he no more shall see my face;
Lysander and myself will fly this place.
Before the time I did Lysander see,
Seem'd Athens as a paradise to me:

¹ Looks; appearance.

² Transformed.

O, then, what graces in my love do dwell,
That he hath turn'd a heaven unto a hell!

Lysander. Helen, to you our minds we will unfold:
To-morrow night, when Phœbe¹ doth behold
Her silver visage in the watery glass,
Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass,
A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal,
Through Athens' gates have we devis'd to steal.

Hermia. And in the wood, where often you and I
Upon faint primrose beds were wont to lie,
Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,
There my Lysander and myself shall meet;
And thence from Athens turn away our eyes,
To seek new friends and stranger companies.
Farewell, sweet playfellow: pray thou for us;
And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius! —
Keep word, Lysander: we must starve our sight
From lovers' food till morrow deep midnight.

Lysander. I will, my Hermia. [*Exit Hermia.*

Helena, adieu:

As you on him, Demetrius dote on you! [*Exit.*

Helena. How happy some o'er other some can be!
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;
He will not know what all but he do know:
And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,
So I, admiring of his qualities.
Things base and vile, holding no quantity,²
Love can transpose to form and dignity:
Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;
And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind:
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgment taste;

¹ Another name of Diana, goddess of the moon.

² "Holding no quantity," i.e., bearing no proportion to what love estimates them.

Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste :
 And therefore is Love said to be a child,
 Because in choice he is so oft beguil'd.
 As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,
 So the boy Love is perjur'd everywhere :
 For ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne,¹
 He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine ;
 And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
 So he dissolv'd, and showers of oaths did melt.
 I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight :
 Then to the wood will he to-morrow night
 Pursue her ; and for this intelligence
 If I have thanks, it is a dear expense :²
 But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
 To have his sight thither and back again.

[*Exit.*]SCENE II. *Athens. Quince's House.*

Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING.

Quince. Is all our company here?

Bottom. You were best to call them generally,³ man by man, according to the scrip.⁴

Quince. Here is the scroll of every man's name, which is thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our interlude before the duke and the duchess, on his wedding day at night.

Bottom. First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on, then read the names of the actors, and so grow to a point.

Quince. Marry, our play is, The most lamentable Comedy, and most cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisby.⁵

¹ Eyes.

² "Dear expense," i.e., it will cost me dear, because it will be in return for my procuring him a sight of my rival.

³ "Severally" is what Bottom means.

⁴ Written list.

⁵ Pyramus and Thisbe were youthful lovers of Babylon, whose parents opposed their marriage. They agreed on a meeting at Ninus' tomb, without

Bottom. A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry. Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll.—Masters, spread yourselves.

Quince. Answer as I call you.—Nick Bottom, the weaver.

Bottom. Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

Quince. You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

Bottom. What is Pyramus? a lover, or a tyrant?

Quince. A lover, that kills himself most gallantly for love.

Bottom. That will ask some tears in the true performing of it: if I do it, let the audience look to their eyes; I will move storms, I will condole¹ in some measure. To the rest.—Yet my chief humor is for a tyrant: I could play Ercles² rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split.

*The raging rocks
And shivering shocks
Shall break the locks
Of prison gates;
And Phibbus'³ car
Shall shine from far,
And make and mar
The foolish Fates.*

This was lofty! Now name the rest of the players. This is Ercles' vein, a tyrant's vein; a lover is more condoling.

the walls of the city. Thisbe was the first at the appointed place, and, affrighted by a lioness which had just torn an ox to pieces, fled to a cave near by, dropping her scarf as she ran, which the beast seized and smeared with its bloody jaws. Pyramus comes, sees the stained garment, and supposing Thisbe has fallen a prey to some wild animal, in an agony of grief kills himself. Thisbe returning, finds the dead body of her lover, and in despair takes her life with the weapon he had used.

¹ "Be pathetic," Bottom means.

² Hercules. "The Twelve Labors of Hercules" had been dramatized in Shakespeare's day with scenes "to tear a cat in" and "make all split," in which the players, as a contemporary writes, "thundered terribly from the stage."

³ Phœbus, god of the sun.

Quince. Francis Flute, the bellows mender.

Flute. Here, Peter Quince.

Quince. Flute, you must take Thisby on you.

Flute. What is Thisby? a wand'ring knight?

Quince. It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

Flute. Nay, faith, let not me play a woman;¹ I have a beard coming.

Quince. That's all one: you shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will.

Bottom. An I may hide my face, let me play Thisby too. I'll speak in a monstrous little voice,—“Thisne, Thisne,—Ah Pyramus, my lover dear! thy Thisby dear, and lady dear!”

Quince. No, no; you must play Pyramus:—and, Flute, you Thisby.

Bottom. Well, proceed.

Quince. Robin Starveling, the tailor.

Starveling. Here, Peter Quince.

Quince. Robin Starveling, you must play Thisby's mother.—Tom Snout, the tinker.

Snout. Here, Peter Quince.

Quince. You, Pyramus' father: myself, Thisby's father.—Snug, the joiner; you, the lion's part: and, I hope, here is a play fitted.

Snug. Have you the lion's part written? pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.

Quince. You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

Bottom. Let me play the lion too: I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar, that I will make the duke say, “Let him roar again, let him roar again.”

Quince. An you should do it too terribly, you would fright the duchess and the ladies, that they would shriek; and that were enough to hang us all.

¹ Women's parts were played by men in England up to the time of Charles II., with or without masks, varying with the youth and good looks of the actors.

All. That would hang us, every mother's son.

Bottom. I grant you, friends, if that you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us: but I will aggravate¹ my voice so that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you an 'twere any nightingale.

Quince. You can play no part but Pyramus; for Pyramus is a sweet-fac'd man; a proper² man, as one shall see in a summer's day; a most lovely gentleman-like man: therefore you must needs play Pyramus.

Bottom. Well, I will undertake it. What beard were I best to play it in?

Quince. Why, what you will.

Bottom. I will discharge it in either your straw-color beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French-crown-color beard — your perfect yellow.

Quince. Some of your French crowns have no hair at all, and then you will play barefac'd. — But, masters, here are your parts: and I am to entreat you, request you, and desire you, to con them by to-morrow night; and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight. There will we rehearse, for if we meet in the city, we shall be dogg'd with company, and our devices known. In the mean time I will draw a bill of properties, such as our play wants. I pray you, fail me not.

Bottom. We will meet; and there we may rehearse most obscenely³ and courageously. Take pains; be perfect: adieu.

Quince. At the duke's oak we meet.

Bottom. Enough; hold or cut bowstrings.⁴ [*Exeunt.*]

¹ "Moderate" is what Bottom means.

² Handsome.

³ Privately; "obscurely" may have been the word Bottom was struggling with.

⁴ "Hold or cut bowstrings," a slang phrase of the day, meaning, "Be there without fail."

ACT II.

SCENE I. *A Wood near Athens.*

Enter, from opposite sides, a Fairy and PUCK.

Puck. How now, spirit! whither wander you?

Fairy. Over hill, over dale,
 Thorough¹ bush, thorough brier,
 Over park, over pale,
 Thorough flood, thorough fire,
 I do wander everywhere,
 Swifter than the moon's sphere;
 And I serve the fairy queen,
 To dew her orbs² upon the green.
 The cowslips tall her pensioners³ be;
 In their gold coats spots you see;
 Those be rubies, fairy favors,
 In those freckles live their savors:

I must go seek some dewdrops here
 And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.
 Farewell, thou lob⁴ of spirits; I'll be gone:
 Our queen and all her elves come here anon.

Puck. The king doth keep his revels here to-night:
 Take heed the queen come not within his sight;
 For Oberon is passing fell and wrath,⁵
 Because that she as her attendant hath

¹ Through.

² Circles of a richer green than that of the surrounding grass, which are often seen in meadows. It was the popular belief that they were caused by the nightly tripping fairies.

³ Queen Elizabeth had a bodyguard of tall, handsome, and gayly uniformed courtiers who were known as "pensioners."

⁴ The Fairy calls Puck the "lob [lubber] of spirits," as the mischievous sprite is of less ethereal nature than the other fairies whom he serves.

⁵ "Fell and wrath," i.e., fierce and wrath.

A lovely boy, stolen from an Indian king ;
She never had so sweet a changeling ;¹
And jealous Oberon would have the child
Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild ;
But she perforce withholds the loved boy,
Crowns him with flowers and makes him all her joy :
And now they never meet in grove or green,
By fountain clear, or spangled starlight sheen,
But they do square,² that all their elves for fear
Creep into acorn cups and hide them there.

Fairy. Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
Call'd Robin Goodfellow : are not you he
That frights the maidens of the villagery ;
Skim milk, and sometimes labor in the quern,³
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn ;
And sometime make the drink to bear no barm ;⁴
Mislead night wanderers, laughing at their harm ?
Those that Hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck,
You do their work, and they shall have good luck :
Are not you he ?

Puck. Thou speak'st aright ;
I am that merry wanderer of the night.
I jest to Oberon, and make him smile
When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
Neighing in likeness of a filly foal :
And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl,
In very likeness of a roasted crab,⁵
And when she drinks, against her lips I bob,

¹ Child stealing or changing was a vicious propensity of the fairies ; the handsome babe being taken from the cradle and carried off, and an ill-favored, deformed child left in its place. The latter was usually called "a changeling." Here the boy taken by the fairies is so called.

² Quarrel.

³ A handmill for grinding corn.

⁴ Froth ; foam.

⁵ Crab apple.

And on her wither'd dewlap pour the ale.
The wisest aunt,¹ telling the saddest tale,
Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me ;
Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,
And "tailor" cries, and falls into a cough ;
And then the whole quire hold their hips and laugh,
And waxen in their mirth, and neeze,² and swear
A merrier hour was never wasted there.
But room, fairy! here comes Oberon.

Fairy. And here my mistress. Would that he were gone!

Enter, from one side, OBERON, with his train ; from the other, TITANIA, with hers.

Oberon. Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

Titania. What, jealous Oberon! — Fairies, skip hence:
I have forsworn his bed and company.

Oberon. Tarry, rash wanton: am not I thy lord?

Titania. Then I must be thy lady: but I know
When thou hast stolen away from fairyland,
And in the shape of Corin³ sat all day,
Playing on pipes of corn,⁴ and versing love
To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here,
Come from the farthest steppe of India?
But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,
Your buskin'd⁵ mistress and your warrior love,
To Theseus must be wedded, and you come
To give their bed joy and prosperity.

¹ Aged people were familiarly called "uncle" or "aunt" by their neighbors in England.

² Sneeze.

³ Corin and Phillida are names given to shepherds and shepherdesses in classic pastoral poetry.

⁴ "Pipes of corn," i.e., musical pipes made of oat or wheat straws bound together.

⁵ Buskins are a sort of leggings to protect the ankles from thorns, etc.

Oberon. How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,
Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?
Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night
From Perigenia, whom he ravished?
And make him with fair *Ægle* break his faith,
With *Ariadne*¹ and *Antiopa*?²

Titania. These are the forgeries of jealousy:
And never, since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest or mead,
By paved fountain or by rushy brook,
Or in the beached margent of the sea,
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea
Contagious fogs; which falling in the land
Have every pelting³ river made so proud
That they have overborne their continents:⁴
The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,
The plowman lost his sweat, and the green corn
Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard;
The fold stands empty in the drowned field,
And crows are fatted with the murrain⁵ flock;

¹ The daughter of Minos, king of Crete, who, it is fabled, kept confined in an intricate labyrinth the Minotaur, a hideous monster which was supposed to devour the youths and maidens yearly exacted by the tyrannical king as tribute from the Athenians. Theseus, of whom *Ariadne* was enamored, having been furnished by her with a clew by which to extricate himself from its windings, entered the labyrinth, slew the monster, and escaping, sailed for Athens, taking *Ariadne* as his bride. He ungratefully abandoned her, however, for the nymph *Ægle* at Naxos, where the vessel had temporarily stopped. (See *Guerber*.)

² See Note 1, page 15.

³ Petty.

⁴ Banks.

⁵ An infectious disease to which cattle are liable.

The nine men's morris¹ is fill'd up with mud,
 And the quaint mazes² in the wanton green,
 For lack of tread are undistinguishable :
 The human mortals want their winter here ;
 No night is now with hymn or carol blest :
 Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
 Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
 That rheu'matic diseases do abound :
 And thorough this distemperature we see
 The seasons alter : hoary-headed frosts
 Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
 And on old Hiems'³ thin and icy crown
 An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
 Is, as in mockery, set : the spring, the summer,
 The childing⁴ autumn, angry winter, change
 Their wonted liveries, and the mazed world,
 By their increase,⁵ now knows not which is which :
 And this same progeny of evils comes
 From our debate, from our dissension ;
 We are their parents and original.

Oberon. Do you amend it then ; it lies in you.
 Why should Titania cross her Oberon ?
 I do but beg a little changeling boy,
 To be my henchman.⁶

Titania. Set your heart at rest :
 The fairyland buys not the child of me.
 His mother was a votaress of my order :
 And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,
 Full often hath she gossip'd by my side,

¹ "Nine men's morris," i.e., a game played with nine men, or pieces, to each player. It was played out of doors, on a square of turf where lines were marked and holes cut, which in rainy weather would become filled with mud.

² This alludes to a game played by boys that was known as "running the figure of eight."

³ Winter.

⁴ Fruitful.

⁵ Product.

⁶ Page.

And sat with me on Neptune's¹ yellow sands,
Marking the embarked traders on the flood,²
Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait
Would imitate, and sail upon the land,
To fetch me trifles, and return again,
As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die;
And for her sake do I rear up her boy,
And for her sake I will not part with him.

Oberon. How long within this wood intend you stay?

Titania. Perchance till after Theseus' wedding day.

If you will patiently dance in our round
And see our moonlight revels, go with us;
If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

Oberon. Give me that boy, and I will go with thee.

Titania. Not for thy fairy kingdom. — Fairies, away!
We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.

[*Exit Titania with her train.*]

Oberon. Well, go thy way: thou shalt not from this grove
Till I torment thee for this injury. —
My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememberest
Since once I sat upon a promontory,
And heard a mermaid³ on a dolphin's back
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
That the rude sea grew civil at her song,
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,
To hear the sea-maid's music.

Puck.

I remember.

¹ Neptune was the mythical god of the ocean and of all waters.

² "Embarked traders on the flood," i.e., trading or merchant vessels under sail.

³ Here used for "siren." The sirens were fabulous nymphs of the sea who were wont to sit on rocky ledges, or swim in the waves around them, "and sing entrancing songs which allured mariners till they turned aside from their course, and their vessels were dashed to pieces on the rocks."

Oberon. That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,
 Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
 Cupid all arm'd: a certain aim he took
 At a fair vestal¹ throned by the west,
 And loos'd his love shaft smartly from his bow,
 As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;
 But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
 Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
 And the imperial votaress passed on,
 In maiden meditation, fancy-free.²
 Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell:
 It fell upon a little western flower,
 Before milk white, now purple with love's wound,
 And maidens call it love-in-idleness.³
 Fetch me that flower; the herb I show'd thee once:
 The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid
 Will make or man or woman madly dote
 Upon the next live creature that it sees.
 Fetch me this herb; and be thou here again
 Ere the leviathan⁴ can swim a league.

Puck. I'll put a girdle round about the earth
 In forty minutes.

[*Exit.*

Oberon. Having once this juice,
 I'll watch Titania when she is asleep,
 And drop the liquor of it in her eyes.
 The next thing then she waking looks upon,
 Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
 On meddling monkey, or on busy ape,⁵
 She shall pursue it with the soul of love:
 And ere I take this charm from off her sight,
 As I can take it with another herb,
 I'll make her render up her page to me.—

¹ The allusion here is a graceful compliment to Elizabeth, the maiden queen of England, in whose reign the play was written.

² Heart-whole.

³ Pansy.

⁴ Whale.

⁵ Busybody.

But who comes here? I am invisible;
And I will overhear their conference.

Enter DEMETRIUS, HELENA following him.

Demetrius. I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?
The one I'll slay, the other slayeth me.
Thou told'st me they were stolen unto this wood;
And here am I, and wode¹ within this wood,
Because I cannot meet my Hermia.
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

Helena. You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant;²
But yet you draw not iron, for my heart
Is true as steel: leave you your power to draw,
And I shall have no power to follow you.

Demetrius. Do I entice you? do I speak you fair?
Or, rather, do I not in plainest truth
Tell you, I do not, nor I cannot love you?

Helena. And even for that do I love you the more.
I am your spaniel; and, Demetrius,
The more you beat me, I will fawn on you:
Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,
Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,
Unworthy as I am, to follow you.
What worsè place can I beg in your love,—
And yet a place of high respect with me,—
Than to be used as you use your dog?

Demetrius. Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit,
For I am sick when I do look on thee.

Helena. And I am sick when I look not on you.

Demetrius. You do impeach³ your modesty too much,
To leave the city and commit yourself
Into the hands of one that loves you not;

¹ Mad; frantic.

² Lodestone; magnet.

³ Bring in question.

To trust the opportunity of night
And the ill counsel of a desert place
With the rich worth of your virginity.

Helena. Your virtue is my privilege for that.
It is not night when I do see your face,
Therefore I think I am not in the night;
Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company,
For you in my respect are all the world:
Then how can it be said I am alone,
When all the world is here to look on me?

Demetrius. I'll run from thee and hide me in the brakes,¹
And leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts.

Helena. The wildest hath not such a heart as you.
Run when you will, the story shall be chang'd:
Apollo² flies, and Daphne holds the chase;
The dove pursues the griffin;³ the mild hind
Makes speed to catch the tiger; bootless speed,
When cowardice pursues and valor flies.

Demetrius. I will not stay thy questions;⁴ let me go:
Or, if thou follow me, do not believe
But I shall do thee mischief in the wood.

Helena. Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field,
You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius!

¹ Thickets.

² The myth is, that Apollo met in a wood a beautiful nymph, Daphne, the daughter of the river god Peneus. "Love at first sight was the immediate consequence on Apollo's part, and he longed to speak to the maid and win her affections." But Daphne fled his approach, and he pursuing, the affrighted maiden invoked her father's protection, who heard her prayer and changed her to a laurel tree just as she was reached by her pursuer. The disappointed lover declared that from thenceforth the laurel would be his favorite tree; and as Apollo was the god of poetry, music, and all fine arts, prizes awarded to poets, musicians, etc., consist of a wreath of laurel leaves. (See Guerber.)

³ A fabulous animal, half lion and half eagle.

⁴ Upbraiding speeches.

Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex :
We cannot fight for love, as men may do ;
We should be woo'd, and were not made to woo.

[*Exit Demetrius.*

I'll follow thee and make a heaven of hell,
To die upon the hand I love so well. [*Exit.*

Oberon. Fare thee well, nymph : ere he do leave this grove,
Thou shalt fly him, and he shall seek thy love.

Reënter PUCK.

Hast thou the flower there? Welcome, wanderer.

Puck. Ay, there it is.

Oberon. I pray thee, give it me.
I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite over-canopied with lush¹ woodbine,
With sweet musk roses and with eglantine :²
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight ;
And there the snake throws³ her enamel'd skin,
Weed⁴ wide enough to wrap a fairy in :
And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,
And make her full of hateful fantasies.
Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove :
A sweet Athenian lady is in love
With a disdainful youth : anoint his eyes ;
But do it when the next thing he espies
May be the lady. Thou shalt know the man
By the Athenian garments he hath on.
Effect it with some care that he may prove

¹ Luxuriant.

² Sweetbrier.

³ Sheds.

⁴ Garment or covering. The word survives in "widow's weeds," the headdress worn by widows.

More fond on her than she upon her love :
And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

Puck. Fear not, my lord, your servant shall do so. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. *Another Part of the Wood.*

Enter TITANIA, with her train.

Titania. Come, now a roundel¹ and a fairy song ;
Then, for the third part of a minute, hence ;
Some to kill cankers in the musk rose buds,
Some war with reremice² for their leathern wings,
To make my small elves coats, and some keep back
The clamorous owl that nightly hoots and wonders
At our quaint spirits. Sing me now asleep ;
Then to your offices and let me rest.

FAIRIES' SONG.

I.

1st Fairy. You spotted snakes with double tongue,
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen ;
Newts³ and blindworms, do no wrong,
Come not near our fairy queen.

CHORUS.

*Philomel,*⁴ with melody
Sing in our sweet lullaby ;
Lulla, lulla, lullaby ; lulla, lulla, lullaby :
Never harm,
Nor spell nor charm,
Come our lovely lady nigh ;
So, good-night, with lullaby.

¹ Hand-in-hand dance.

² Bats.

³ Lizards.

⁴ Philomel, the nightingale, from Philomela, daughter of King Pandion of Athens, of whom the myth is that she was changed to a nightingale.

II.

2d Fairy. Weaving spiders, come not here;
Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence!
Beetles black, approach not near:
Worm nor snail, do no offense.
Philomel, with melody, etc.

1st Fairy. Hence, away! now all is well:
One aloof stand sentinel.

[*Exeunt Fairies. Titania sleeps.*]

Enter OBERON, and squeezes the flower on Titania's eyelids.

Oberon. What thou seest when thou dost wake,
Do it for thy truelove take;
Love and languish for his sake:
Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,
Pard,¹ or boar with bristled hair,
In thy eye that shall appear
When thou wak'st, it is thy dear:
Wake when some vile thing is near. [Exit.

Enter LYSANDER and HERMIA.

Lysander. Fair love, you faint with wand'ring in the wood;
And to speak troth, I have forgot our way:
We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,
And tarry for the comfort of the day.

Hermia. Be it so, Lysander: find you out a bed;
For I upon this bank will rest my head.

Lysander. One turf shall serve as pillow for us both;
One heart, one bed, two bosoms, and one troth.

Hermia. Nay, good Lysander; for my sake, my dear,
Lie further off yet; do not lie so near.

Lysander. O, take the sense, sweet, of my innocence!

¹ Leopard.

Love takes the meaning in love's conference.
 I mean, that my heart unto yours is knit
 So that but one heart we can make of it;
 Two bosoms interchained with an oath;
 So then two bosoms and a single troth.
 Then by your side no bed room me deny;
 For lying so, Hermia, I do not lie.

Hermia. Lysander riddles very prettily:
 Now much beshrew¹ my manners and my pride,
 If Hermia meant to say Lysander lied.
 But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy
 Lie further off; in human modesty,
 Such separation as may well be said
 Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid,
 So far be distant; and, good-night, sweet friend:
 Thy love ne'er alter till thy sweet life end!

Lysander. Amen, amen, to that fair prayer, say I;
 And then end life when I end loyalty!
 Here is my bed: sleep give thee all his rest!

Hermia. With half that wish the wisher's eyes be press'd!

[*They sleep.*]

Enter PUCK.

Puck. Through the forest have I gone,
 But Athenian found I none,
 On whose eyes I might approve
 This flower's force in stirring love.
 Night and silence.—Who is here?
 Weeds of Athens he doth wear:
 This is he, my master said,
 Despised the Athenian maid;
 And here the maiden, sleeping sound,
 On the dank and dirty ground.
 Pretty soul! she durst not lie

¹ A gentle term of reproach or reproof.

Near this lack-love, this kill-courtesy.
Churl, upon thy eyes I throw
All the power this charm doth owe.¹
When thou wak'st, let love forbid
Sleep his seat on thy eyelid.
So awake when I am gone;
For I must now to Oberon.

[*Exit.*]

Enter DEMETRIUS and HELENA running.

Helena. Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

Demetrius. I charge thee, hence, and do not haunt me thus.

Helena. O, wilt thou darkling² leave me? do not so.

Demetrius. Stay, on thy peril: I alone will go.

[*Exit.*]

Helena. O, I am out of breath in this fond chase!

The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.

Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies;

For she hath blessed and attractive eyes.

How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears:

If so, my eyes are oftener wash'd than hers.

No, no, I am as ugly as a bear;

For beasts that meet me run away for fear:

Therefore no marvel though Demetrius

Do, as a monster, fly my presence thus.³

What wicked and dissembling glass of mine

Made me compare with Hermia's sphery eyne?⁴—

But who is here? Lysander! on the ground!

Dead? or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.—

Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.

Lysander. [*Awaking*] And run through fire I will for thy sweet
sake.

Transparent Helena! Nature shows her art,

That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.

¹ Own. ² In the dark.

³ "Do as a," etc., i.e., do fly my presence as that of a monster.

⁴ "Sphery eyne," i.e., starry eyes.

Where is Demetrius? O, how fit a word
Is that vile name to perish on my sword!

Helena. Do not say so, Lysander; say not so.
What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what though?¹
Yet Hermia still loves you: then be content.

Lysander. Content with Hermia! No; I do repent
The tedious minutes I with her have spent.
Not Hermia but Helena I love:
Who will not change a raven for a dove?
The will of man is by his reason sway'd;
And reason says you are the worthier maid.
Things growing are not ripe until their season:
So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason;
And touching now the point of human skill,
Reason becomes the marshal to my will,²
And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook
Love's stories written in love's richest book.

Helena. Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?
When at your hands did I deserve this scorn?
Is't not enough, is't not enough, young man,
That I did never, no, nor never can,
Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,
But you must flout³ my insufficiency?
Good troth, you do me wrong, good sooth, you do,
In such disdainful manner me to woo.
But fare you well: perforce I must confess
I thought you lord of more true gentleness.
O, that a lady, of one man refus'd,
Should of another therefore be abus'd! [Exit.]

Lysander. She sees not Hermia.— Hermia, sleep thou there;
And never mayst thou come Lysander near!

¹ "What though," i.e., what matters it?

² "And touching now," etc., i.e., and having now come to maturity, my will is guided by reason.

³ Jeer at.

For as a surfeit of the sweetest things
The deepest loathing to the stomach brings,
Or as the heresies that men do leave
Are hated most of those they did deceive,
So thou, my surfeit and my heresy,
Of all be hated, but the most of me!
And, all my powers, address your love and might
To honor Helen and to be her knight! [Exit.

Hermia. [Awaking] Help me, Lysander, help me! do thy best
To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast!
Ay me, for pity! what a dream was here!
Lysander, look how I do quake with fear.
Methought a serpent eat my heart away,
And you sat smiling at his cruel prey.
Lysander! what, remov'd? Lysander! lord!
What, out of hearing? gone? no sound, no word?
Alack, where are you? speak, an if you hear;
Speak, of all loves!¹ I swoon almost with fear.
No? then I well perceive you are not nigh:
Either death or you I'll find immediately. [Exit.

ACT III.

SCENE I. *The Wood. Titania lying asleep.*

Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING.

Bottom. Are we all met?

Quince. Pat, pat;² and here's a marvelous convenient place
for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our stage, this haw-
thorn brake our tiring-house;³ and we will do it in action as we
will do it before the duke.

Bottom. Peter Quince,—

Quince. What sayest thou, bully Bottom?

¹ "Of all loves," i.e., for love's sake.

² To the minute; promptly.

³ Dressing room.

Bottom. There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisby that will never please. First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself, which the ladies cannot abide. How answer you that?

Snout. By'r lakin,¹ a parlous² fear.

Starveling. I believe we must leave the killing out, when all is done.

Bottom. Not a whit: I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords and that Pyramus is not killed indeed;³ and, for the more better assurance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver: this will put them out of fear.

Quince. Well, we will have such a prologue; and it shall be written in eight and six.⁴

Bottom. No, make it two more; let it be written in eight and eight.

Snout. Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?

Starveling. I fear it, I promise you.

Bottom. Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves: to bring in—God shield us!—a lion among ladies, is a most dreadful thing; for there is not a more fearful wild fowl than your lion living; and we ought to look to 't.

Snout. Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

Bottom. Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck: and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect,⁵—"Ladies,"—or "Fair ladies, I would wish you,"—or "I would request you,"—or "I would entreat you, not to fear, not to tremble: my life for yours."⁶ If you think I come hither as a lion, it were

¹ This petty oath is a diminutive of "By our Lady," i.e., the Holy Virgin.

² Perilous. ³ Really; actually.

⁴ "Eight and six," i.e., in verses alternately of eight and six syllables; the ordinary ballad measure.

⁵ Effect. ⁶ "My life for yours," i.e., I pledge my life for yours.

pity of my life: no, I am no such thing; I am a man as other men are;" and there indeed let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner.

Quince. Well, it shall be so. But there is two hard things; that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber; for, you know, Pyramus and Thisby meet by moonlight.

Snout. Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

Bottom. A calendar, a calendar! look in the almanac; find out moonshine, find out moonshine.

Quince. Yes, it doth shine that night.

Bottom. Why, then may you leave a casement of the great chamber window, where we play, open, and the moon may shine in at the casement.

Quince. Ay; or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lanthorn,¹ and say he comes to disfigure, or to present, the person of Moonshine. Then, there is another thing: we must have a wall in the great chamber; for Pyramus and Thisby, says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall.

Snout. You can never bring in a wall. What say you, Bottom?

Bottom. Some man or other must present Wall: and let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some roughcast about him, to signify wall; and let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisby whisper.

Quince. If that may be, then all is well. Come, sit down, every mother's son, and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you begin. When you have spoken your speech, enter into that brake: and so every one according to his cue.²

Enter PUCK behind.

Puck. What hempen homespuns³ have we swaggering here, So near the cradle of the fairy queen?

¹ Lantern.

² The last words of a speech, which give the next speaker a hint when to begin. Actors study their cues as well as the lines they are to speak.

³ Rustic fellows.

What, a play toward!¹ I'll be an auditor;

An actor too, perhaps, if I see cause.

Quince. Speak, Pyramus.—Thisby, stand forth.

Bottom. "Thisby, the flowers of odious savors sweet,"—

Quince. Odors, odors.

Bottom. ——"odors savors sweet:

So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisby dear.

But hark, a voice! stay thou but here a while,

And by and by I will to thee appear." [*Exit.*

Puck. A stranger Pyramus than e'er play'd here! [*Exit.*

Flute. Must I speak now?

Quince. Ay, marry, must you; for you must understand he goes but to see a noise that he heard, and is to come again.

Flute. "Most radiant Pyramus, most lily white of hue,

Of color like the red rose on triumphant brier,

Most brisky juvenal,² and eke most lovely Jew,

As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire,

I'll meet thee, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb."

Quince. "Ninus' tomb," man: why, you must not speak that yet; that you answer to Pyramus: you speak all your part at once, cues and all.—Pyramus, enter: your cue is past; it is, "never tire."

Flute. O,— "As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire."

Reënter PUCK, and BOTTOM with an ass's head.

Bottom. "If I were fair, Thisby, I were only thine."

Quince. O monstrous! O strange! we are haunted. Pray, masters! fly, masters! Help!

[*Exeunt Quince, Snug, Flute, Snout, and Starveling.*

Puck. I'll follow you, I'll lead you about a round,

Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier:

Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,

¹ About to begin.

² Youth. An affected phrase of the time, which Shakespeare ridicules.

A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire ;
And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,
Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn. [*Exit.*]

Bottom. Why do they run away? this is a knavery of them to make me afeard.

Reënter SNOUT.

Snout. O Bottom, thou art chang'd! what do I see on thee?

Bottom. What do you see? you see an ass head of your own, do you? [*Exit Snout.*]

Reënter QUINCE.

Quince. Bless thee, Bottom! bless thee! thou art translated.¹ [*Exit.*]

Bottom. I see their knavery: this is to make an ass of me; to fright me, if they could. But I will not stir from this place, do what they can. I will walk up and down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid. [*Sings.*]

*The ousel cock*² *so black of hue,*
With orange-tawny bill,
*The thristle*³ *with his note so true,*
The wren with little quill,—

Titania. [*Awaking*] What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

Bottom. [*Sings*]

The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
The plain-song cuckoo gray,
Whose note full many a man doth mark,
And dares not answer nay; —

for, indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a bird? who would give a bird the lie, though he cry "cuckoo" never so?

Titania. I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again :
Mine ear is much enamor'd of thy note ;

¹ Transformed.

² The ousel cock is the male blackbird.

³ Song thrush.

So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;
 And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me
 On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.

Bottom. Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that: and yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together nowadays; the more the pity that some honest neighbors will not make them friends. Nay, I can glee¹ upon occasion.

Titania. Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

Bottom. Not so, neither; but if I had wit enough to get out of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn.

Titania. Out of this wood do not desire to go:
 Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no.
 I am a spirit of no common rate:
 The summer still doth tend upon my state;
 And I do love thee: therefore, go with me;
 I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee,
 And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,
 And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep:
 And I will purge thy mortal grossness so
 That thou shalt like an airy spirit go. —
 Peaseblossom! Cobweb! Moth! and Mustardseed!

Enter PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, *and* MUSTARDSEED.

Peaseblossom. Ready.

Cobweb. And I.

Moth. And I.

Mustardseed. And I.

All. Where shall we go?

Titania. Be kind and courteous to this gentleman;
 Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes;
 Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
 With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;

¹ Jest satirically; jeer.

The honey-bags steal from the humblebees,
And for night tapers crop their waxen thighs
And light them at the fiery glowworm's eyes,
To have my love to bed and to arise;¹
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes.
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

Peaseblossom. Hail, mortal!

Cobweb. Hail!

Moth. Hail!

Mustardseed. Hail!

Bottom. I cry your worship's mercy,² heartily: I beseech your worship's name.

Cobweb. Cobweb.

Bottom. I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Cobweb: if I cut my finger,³ I shall make bold with you.—Your name, honest gentleman?

Peaseblossom. Peaseblossom.

Bottom. I pray you, commend me to Mistress Squash,⁴ your mother, and to Master Peascod, your father. Good Master Peaseblossom, I shall desire you of more acquaintance too.—Your name, I beseech you, sir?

Mustardseed. Mustardseed.

Bottom. Good Master Mustardseed, I know your patience well: that same cowardly, giant-like ox-beef hath devoured many a gentleman of your house: I promise you your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now. I desire your more acquaintance, good Master Mustardseed.

Titania. Come, wait upon him; lead him to my bower.

¹ "To have my love," etc., i.e., to escort him to bed and wait on him when he gets up.

² "I cry your," etc., i.e., I beg your worship's pardon.

³ Cobweb was sometimes used to stop the bleeding of slight wounds.

⁴ A term applied to vegetables usually eaten before fully ripe, but as yet too immature for use.

The moon, methinks, looks with a watery eye;
 And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,
 Lamenting some enforced chastity.
 Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. *Another Part of the Wood.*

Enter OBERON.

Oberon. I wonder if Titania be awak'd;
 Then, what it was that next came in her eye,
 Which she must dote on in extremity.¹

Enter PUCK.

Here comes my messenger.

How now, mad spirit!

What night rule² now about this haunted grove?

Puck. My mistress with a monster is in love.
 Near to her close and consecrated bower,
 While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,
 A crew of patches,³ rude mechanicals,⁴
 That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,
 Were met together to rehearse a play
 Intended for great Theseus' nuptial day.
 The shallowest thickskin of that barren sort,⁵
 Who Pyramus presented, in their sport
 Forsook his scene and enter'd in a brake:
 When I did him at this advantage take,
 An ass's nole⁶ I fixed on his head:
 Anon his Thisbe must be answered,
 And forth my mimic⁷ comes. When they him spy,
 As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,

¹ "In extremity," i.e., excessively.

² Work or conduct customary in the night.

³ Dullards.

⁴ Mechanics.

⁵ "Barren sort," i.e., stupid set.

⁶ A grotesque name for head.

⁷ Player.

Or russet-pated choughs,¹ many in sort,¹
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky,
So, at his sight, away his fellows fly;
And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls;
He murder cries and help from Athens calls.
Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,
Made senseless things begin to do them wrong;
For briers and thorns at their apparel snatch;
Some, sleeves; some, hats; from yielders all things catch.
I led them on in this distracted fear,
And left sweet Pyramus translated there:
When in that moment, so it came to pass,
Titania wak'd, and straightway lov'd an ass.

Oberon. This falls out better than I could devise.
But hast thou yet latch'd² the Athenian's eyes
With the love juice, as I did bid thee do?

Puck. I took him sleeping,—that is finish'd too,—
And the Athenian woman by his side;
That, when he wak'd, of force she must be ey'd.³

Enter HERMIA and DEMETRIUS.

Oberon. Stand close: this is the same Athenian.

Puck. This is the woman, but not this the man.

Demetrius. O, why rebuke you him that loves you so?
Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.

Hermia. Now I but chide; but I should use thee worse,
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,
And kill me too.

The sun was not so true unto the day

¹ "Russet-pated choughs," etc., i.e., a flock of gray-headed jackdaws.

² Smeared.

³ Seen.

As he to me: would he have stolen away
 From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon
 This whole earth may be bor'd, and that the moon
 May through the center creep, and so displease
 Her brother's noontide with the Antipodes.¹
 It cannot be but thou hast murder'd him;
 So should a murd'rer look, so dead, so grim.

Demetrius. So should the murder'd look, and so should I,
 Pierc'd through the heart with your stern cruelty:
 Yet you, the murd'rer, look as bright, as clear,
 As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.

Hermia. What's this to my Lysander? where is he?
 Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?

Demetrius. I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

Hermia. Out, dog! out, cur! thou driv'st me past the bounds
 Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him, then?
 Henceforth be never number'd among men!
 O, once tell true, tell true, even for my sake!
 Durst thou have look'd upon him being awake,
 And hast thou kill'd him sleeping? O brave touch!²
 Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?
 An adder did it; for with doubler tongue
 Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

Demetrius. You spend your passion on a mispris'd mood:³
 I am not guilty of Lysander's blood;
 Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

Hermia. I pray thee, tell me then that he is well.

Demetrius. An if I could, what should I get therefore?

Hermia. A privilege never to see me more.
 And from thy hated presence part I so:
 See me no more, whether he be dead or no.

[*Exit.*]

Demetrius. There is no following her in this fierce vein:⁴
 Here, therefore, for a while I will remain.

¹ Those who live on the opposite side of the earth.

² Deed.

³ "On a mispris'd mood," i.e., on a mistaken caprice.

⁴ Humor.

So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow
For debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe ;
Which now in some slight measure it will pay,
If for his tender here I make some stay. [*Lies down and sleeps.*]

Oberon. What hast thou done? thou hast mistaken quite
And laid the love juice on some truelove's sight :
Of thy misprision must perforce ensue
Some true love turn'd and not a false turn'd true.¹

Puck. Then fate o'errules, that, one man holding troth,
A million fail, confounding² oath on oath.

Oberon. About the wood go swifter than the wind,
And Helena of Athens look thou find :
All fancy-sick³ she is and pale of cheer,⁴
With sighs of love, that cost the fresh blood dear.
By some illusion see thou bring her here :
I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

Puck. I go, I go ; look how I go,
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow. [*Exit.*]

Oberon. Flower of this purple dye,
Hit with Cupid's archery,
Sink in apple of his eye.
When his love he doth espy,
Let her shine as gloriously
As the Venus of the sky.
When thou wak'st, if she be by,
Beg of her for remedy.

Reënter PUCK.

Puck. Captain of our fairy band,
Helena is here at hand ;
And the youth, mistook by me,

¹ "Of thy misprision," etc., i.e., the result of your mistake will necessarily be some true lover turned inconstant, and not a false lover turned true. Misprision means "neglect" or "mistake."

² Breaking.

³ Love-sick.

⁴ Face.

Pleading for a lover's fee.
 Shall we their fond pageant¹ see?
 Lord, what fools these mortals be!
Oberon. Stand aside: the noise they make
 Will cause Demetrius to awake.

Puck. Then will two at once woo one;
 That must needs be sport alone;²
 And those things do best please me
 That befall preposterously.

Enter LYSANDER *and* HELENA.

Lysander. Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?

Scorn and derision never come in tears:
 Look, when I vow, I weep; and vows so born,
 In their nativity all truth appears.
 How can these things in me seem scorn to you,
 Bearing the badge of faith to prove them true?

Helena. You do advance³ your cunning more and more.
 When truth kills truth, O devilish-holy fray!
 These vows are Hermia's: will you give her o'er?
 Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh:
 Your vows to her and me, put in two scales,
 Will even weigh, and both as light as tales.⁴

Lysander. I had no judgment when to her I swore.

Helena. Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er.

Lysander. Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

Demetrius. [*Awaking*] O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect,
 divine!

To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
 Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show
 Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!

¹ "Fond pageant," i.e., foolish display.

² Beyond all comparison.

³ Exhibit.

⁴ Fairy tales.

That pure congealed white, high Taurus'¹ snow,
Fann'd with the eastern wind, turns to a crow
When thou hold'st up thy hand. O, let me kiss
This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!

Helena. O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent
To set against me for your merriment:
If you were civil and knew courtesy,
You would not do me thus much injury.
Can you not hate me, as I know you do,
But you must join in souls to mock me too?
If you were men, as men you are in show,
You would not use a gentle lady so;
To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,
When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.
You both are rivals, and love Hermia;
And now both rivals, to mock Helena:
A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,
To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes
With your derision! none of noble sort
Would so offend a virgin, and extort²
A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

Lysander. You are unkind, Demetrius; be not so;
For you love Hermia; this you know I know:
And here, with all good will, with all my heart,
In Hermia's love I yield you up my part;
And yours of Helena to me bequeath,
Whom I do love and will do till my death.

Helena. Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

Demetrius. Lysander, keep thy Hermia; I will none:
If e'er I lov'd her, all that love is gone.
My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourn'd,

¹ The name (which itself means a high mountain) given by the ancients to a chain of mountains in Asia Minor.

² Exhaust.

And now to Helen is it home return'd,
There to remain.

Lysander. Helen, it is not so.

Demetrius. Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,
Lest, to thy peril, thou aby¹ it dear.
Look, where thy love comes ; yonder is thy dear.

Reënter HERMIA.

Hermia. Dark night, that from the eye his² function takes,
The ear more quick of apprehension makes ;
Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,
It pays the hearing double recompense.
Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found ;
Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.
But why unkindly didst thou leave me so?

Lysander. Why should he stay, whom love doth press to go?

Hermia. What love could press Lysander from my side?

Lysander. Lysander's love, that would not let him bide ;
Fair Helena, who more engilds the night
Than all yon fiery oes³ and eyes of light.
Why seek'st thou me? could not this make thee know,
The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so?

Hermia. You speak not as you think : it cannot be.

Helena. Lo, she is one of this confederacy!
Now I perceive they have conjoin'd all three
To fashion this false sport in spite of me.⁴
Injurious Hermia! most ungrateful maid!
Have you conspir'd, have you with these contriv'd
To bait⁵ me with this foul derision?
Is all the counsel that we two have shar'd,
The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,

¹ Atone for.

² Its.

³ Orbs ; stars.

⁴ " In spite of me," i.e., with malicious feeling towards me.

⁵ Worry.

When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us, — O, is it all forgot?
All school-days' friendship, childhood innocence?
We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,¹
Have with our needles created both one flower,
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
Both warbling of one song, both in one key,
As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds,
Had been incorporate. So we grew together,
Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,
But yet an union in partition,
Two lovely berries molded on one stem;
So, with two seeming bodies, but one heart;
Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,
Due but to one and crowned with one crest.²
And will you rent our ancient love asunder,
To join with men in scorning your poor friend?
It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly:
Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,
Though I alone do feel the injury.

Hermia. I am amazed at your passionate words.
I scorn you not: it seems that you scorn me.

Helena. Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,
To follow me and praise my eyes and face?
And made your other love, Demetrius,
Who even but now did spurn me with his foot,
To call me goddess, nymph, divine and rare,
Precious, celestial? Wherefore speaks he this
To her he hates? and wherefore doth Lysander
Deny your love, so rich within his soul,

1 "Two artificial gods," i.e., two gods working as artificers.

2 "Two of the first," etc. Helena explains by a simile: "We had two of the first—i.e., bodies—like the double coats (of arms) in heraldry that belong to man and wife as one person, but which, like our single heart, have but one crest." (DOUCE.)

And tender me, forsooth, affection,
But by your setting on, by your consent?
What though I be not so in grace as you,
So hung upon with love, so fortunate,
But miserable most, to love unlov'd?
This you should pity rather than despise.

Hermia. I understand not what you mean by this.

Helena. Ay, do, persevere,¹ counterfeit sad looks,
Make mouths upon me when I turn my back ;
Wink each at other ; hold the sweet jest up :
This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled.
If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
You would not make me such an argument.²
But fare ye well : 'tis partly my own fault ;
Which death or absence soon shall remedy.

Lysander. Stay, gentle Helena ; hear my excuse :
My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena !

Helena. O excellent !

Hermia. Sweet, do not scorn her so.

Demetrius. If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

Lysander. Thou canst compel no more than she entreat :
Thy threats have no more strength than her weak prayers. —
Helen, I love thee ; by my life, I do :
I swear by that which I will lose for thee,
To prove him false that says I love thee not.

Demetrius. I say I love thee more than he can do.

Lysander. If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too.

Demetrius. Quick, come !

Hermia. Lysander, whereto tends all this ?

Lysander. Away, you Ethiope !

Demetrius. No, no, sir ;
Seem to break loose ; take on as you would follow,
But yet come not : you are a tame man,³ go !

¹ Persevere.

² Subject of mirth.

³ "Tame man," i.e., coward.

Lysander. Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! vile thing, let loose,
Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent!

Hermia. Why are you grown so rude? what change is this?
Sweet love, —

Lysander. Thy love! out, tawny Tartar, out!
Out, loathed medicine! hated potion, hence!

Hermia. Do you not jest?

Helena. Yes, sooth; and so do you.

Lysander. Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

Demetrius. I would I had your bond, for I perceive
A weak bond holds you:¹ I'll not trust your word.

Lysander. What, should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead?
Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so.

Hermia. What, can you do me greater harm than hate?

Hate me! wherefore? O me! what news, my love!

Am not I Hermia? are not you Lysander?

I am as fair now as I was erewhile.

Since night you lov'd me; yet since night you left me:

Why, then you left me—O, the gods forbid!—

In earnest, shall I say?

Lysander. Ay, by my life;

And never did desire to see thee more.

Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt;

Be certain, nothing truer; 'tis no jest

That I do hate thee and love Helena.

Hermia. O me! you juggler! you canker blossom!

You thief of love! what, have you come by night

And stolen my love's heart from him?

Helena. Fine, i'faith!

Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,

No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear

Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?

Fie, fie! you counterfeit, you puppet, you!

¹ "A weak bond," etc.; Demetrius refers to Hermia, who hangs on to Lysander to detain him.

Hermia. Puppet! why so? ay, that way goes the game.
Now I perceive that she hath made compare
Between our statures; she hath urg'd her height;
And with her personage, her tall personage,
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevail'd with him. —
And are you grown so high in his esteem,
Because I am so dwarfish and so low?
How low am I, thou painted maypole? speak;
How low am I? I am not yet so low
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

Helena. I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,
Let her not hurt me: I was never curst;¹
I have no gift at all in shrewishness;
I am a right maid for my cowardice:
Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,
Because she is something lower than myself,
That I can match her.

Hermia. Lower! hark, again.

Helena. Good *Hermia*, do not be so bitter with me.
I evermore did love you, *Hermia*,
Did ever keep your counsels, never wrong'd you;
Save that, in love unto *Demetrius*,
I told him of your stealth unto this wood.
He follow'd you; for love I follow'd him;
But he hath chid me hence and threaten'd me
To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too:
And now, so you will let me quiet go,
To Athens will I bear my folly back
And follow you no further. Let me go:
You see how simple and how fond² I am.

Hermia. Why, get you gone: who is't that hinders you?

Helena. A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.

Hermia. What, with *Lysander*?

Helena. With *Demetrius*.

¹ Spiteful.

² Foolish.

Lysander. Be not afraid; she shall not harm thee, Helena.

Demetrius. No, sir, she shall not, though you take her part.

Helena. O, when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd!¹

She was a vixen when she went to school;

And though she be but little, she is fierce.

Hermia. "Little" again! nothing but "low" and "little"!

Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?

Let me come to her.

Lysander. Get you gone, you dwarf;

You minimus,² of hindering knotgrass³ made;

You bead, you acorn.

Demetrius. You are too officious

In her behalf that scorns your services.

Let her alone: speak not of Helena;

Take not her part; for, if thou dost intend

Never so little show of love to her,

Thou shalt aby it.

Lysander. Now she holds me not;

Now follow, if thou dar'st, to try whose right,

Of thine or mine, is most in Helena.

Demetrius. Follow! nay, I'll go with thee, cheek by jole.⁴

[*Exeunt Lysander and Demetrius.*]

Hermia. You, mistress, all this coil is 'long of you.⁵

Nay, go not back.

Helena. I will not trust you, I,

Nor longer stay in your curst company.

Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray,

My legs are longer, though, to run away. [Exit.]

Hermia. I am amaz'd, and know not what to say. [Exit.]

¹ Sharp-tongued; shrewish.

² Mere atom; smallest thing.

³ A kind of grass that was supposed to hinder the growth of children.

⁴ "Cheek by jole," i.e., close together, cheek by cheek. Jole, or jowl, is the jaw or cheek.

⁵ "All this coil," etc., i.e., all this trouble is of your making.

Oberon. This is thy negligence : still thou mistak'st,
Or else committ'st thy knaveries willfully.

Puck. Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook.
Did not you tell me I should know the man
By the Athenian garments he had on?
And so far blameless proves my enterprise,
That I have 'nointed an Athenian's eyes ;
And so far am I glad it so did sort,¹
As this their jangling I esteem a sport.

Oberon. Thou seest these lovers seek a place to fight :
Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night ;
The starry welkin² cover thou anon
With drooping fog as black as Acheron,³
And lead these testy rivals so astray
As one come not within another's way.
Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue,
Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong ;
And sometime rail thou like Demetrius ;
And from each other look thou lead them thus,
Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep
With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep :
Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye ;
Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,
To take from thence all error with his⁴ might,
And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.
When they next wake, all this derision
Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision ;
And back to Athens shall the lovers wend,
With league⁵ whose date till death shall never end.
Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,
I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy ;

¹ Happen. ² Sky.

³ A mythical stream, whose dark, swift current marked the confines of the lower world.

⁴ Its. ⁵ League of friendship.

And then I will her charmed eye release
From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.

Puck. My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,
For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,
And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger,¹
At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,
Troop home to churchyards: damned spirits all,
That in crossways and floods have burial,²
Already to their wormy beds are gone;
For fear lest day should look their shames upon,
They willfully themselves exile from light,
And must for aye consort with black-brow'd night.

Oberon. But we are spirits of another sort:
I with the morning's love have oft made sport;³
And, like a forester, the groves may tread,
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,
Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams.
But, notwithstanding, haste; make no delay:
We may effect this business yet ere day.

[*Exit.*

Puck. Up and down, up and down,
 I will lead them up and down:
 I am fear'd in field and town:
 Goblin, lead them up and down.

Here comes one.

¹ The morning star, the forerunner of Aurora, goddess of the dawn.

² Formerly in England the bodies of suicides were subjected to ignominious burial in the public highway. It was the belief of the ancients that the shades of those who were drowned, and of those on whose bodies the rites of sepulture had never been regularly bestowed, were condemned to wander for a hundred years before they were allowed to cross the Acheron to reach Pluto's throne and hear his decree.

³ "With the morning's," etc., i.e., have often sported with Aurora, the goddess of the dawn or morning.

Reënter LYSANDER.

Lysander. Where art thou, proud Demetrius? speak thou now.

Puck. Here, villain; drawn and ready. Where art thou?

Lysander. I will be with thee straight.

Puck. Follow me, then,

To plainer ground. [*Exit Lysander, as following the voice.*]

Reënter DEMETRIUS.

Demetrius. Lysander! speak again.

Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled?

Speak! In some bush? Where dost thou hide thy head?

Puck. Thou coward, art thou bragging to the stars,
Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars,
And wilt not come? Come, recreant; come, thou child;
I'll whip thee with a rod: he is defil'd
That draws a sword on thee.

Demetrius. Yea, art thou there?

Puck. Follow my voice: we'll try no manhood here.

[*Exeunt.*]

Reënter LYSANDER.

Lysander. He goes before me and still dares me on:

When I come where he calls, then he is gone.

The villain is much lighter-heel'd than I:

I follow'd fast, but faster he did fly;

That fallen am I in dark uneven way,

And here will rest me. [*Lies down.*] Come, thou gentle day!

For if but once thou show me thy gray light,

I'll find Demetrius and revenge this spite.¹ [*Sleeps.*]

Reënter PUCK and DEMETRIUS.

Puck. Ho, ho, ho! Coward, why com'st thou not?

Demetrius. Abide² me, if thou dar'st; for well I wot³

¹ Insult.

² Wait for.

³ Know.

Thou runn'st before me, shifting every place,
And dar'st not stand, nor look me in the face.
Where art thou now?

Puck. Come hither: I am here.

Demetrius. Nay, then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt buy this
dear,

If ever I thy face by daylight see:

Now, go thy way. Faintness constraineth me

To measure out my length on this cold bed.

By day's approach look to be visited. [*Lies down and sleeps.*]

Reënter HELENA.

Helena. O weary night, O long and tedious night,

Abate thy hours! Shine comforts from the east,

That I may back to Athens by daylight,

From these that my poor company detest.

And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye,

Steal me awhile from mine own company.

[*Lies down and sleeps.*]

Puck. Yet but three? Come one more;

Two of both kinds makes up four.

Here she comes, curst and sad:

Cupid is a knavish lad,

Thus to make poor females mad.

Reënter HERMIA.

Hermia. Never so weary, never so in woe,

Bedabbled with the dew and torn with briers,

I can no further crawl, no further go;

My legs can keep no pace with my desires.

Here will I rest me till the break of day.

Heavens shield Lysander, if they mean a fray!

[*Lies down and sleeps.*]

Puck.

On the ground
 Sleep sound :
 I'll apply
 To your eye,
 Gentle lover, remedy.

[*Squeezing the juice on Lysander's eyes.*

When thou wak'st,
 Thou tak'st
 True delight
 In the sight
 Of thy former lady's eye :
 And the country proverb known,
 That every man should take his own,
 In your waking shall be shown :
 Jack shall have Jill ;
 Naught shall go ill ;

The man shall have his mare again,¹ and all shall be well.

[*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *The Same. Lysander, Demetrius, Helena, and Hermia, lying asleep.*

Enter TITANIA and BOTTOM ; PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, MUSTARD-SEED, and other Fairies attending ; OBERON behind, unseen.

Titania. Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,
 While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,²
 And stick musk roses in thy sleek smooth head,
 And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.
Bottom. Where's Peaseblossom?
Peaseblossom. Ready.

¹ "The man shall," etc., a proverbial expression signifying that all will come right in the end.

² Caress.

Bottom. Scratch my head, Peaseblossom. Where's Mounsieur Cobweb?

Cobweb. Ready.

Bottom. Mounsieur Cobweb, good mounsieur, get you your weapons in your hand, and kill me a red-hipped humblebee on the top of a thistle; and, good mounsieur, bring me the honey-bag. Do not fret yourself too much in the action, mounsieur; and, good mounsieur, have a care the honey-bag break not; I would be loath to have you overflown¹ with a honey-bag, signior. Where's Mounsieur Mustardseed?

Mustardseed. Ready.

Bottom. Give me your neaf,² Mounsieur Mustardseed. Pray you, leave³ your courtesy, good mounsieur.

Mustardseed. What's your will?

Bottom. Nothing, good mounsieur, but to help Cavalery⁴ Cobweb to scratch. I must to the barber's, mounsieur; for methinks I am marvelous hairy about the face; and I am such a tender ass, if my hair do but tickle me, I must scratch.

Titania. What, wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love?

Bottom. I have a reasonable good ear in music. Let's have the tongs and the bones.

Titania. Or say, sweet love, what thou desirest to eat.

Bottom. Truly, a peck of provender: I could munch your good dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle⁵ of hay: good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow.

Titania. I have a venturous fairy that shall seek The squirrel's hoard, and fetch thee thence new nuts.

Bottom. I had rather have a handful or two of dried peas. But, I pray you, let none of your people stir me: I have an exposition⁶ of sleep come upon me.

Titania. Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms. — Fairies, be gone, and be all ways away.⁷ [*Exeunt fairies.*]

¹ Overflowed.

² Hand or fist.

³ Discard.

⁴ Cavalier.

⁵ Bundle.

⁶ Disposition.

⁷ "Be all ways away," i.e., disperse yourselves in every direction.

So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle
Gently entwist; the female ivy so
Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.
O, how I love thee! how I dote on thee!

[*They sleep.*]

Enter PUCK.

Oberon. [*Advancing*] Welcome, good Robin. Seest thou this
sweet sight?

Her dotage now I do begin to pity;
For, meeting her of late behind the wood,
Seeking sweet favors for this hateful fool,
I did upbraid her and fall out with her;
For she his hairy temples then had rounded
With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers;
And that same dew, which sometime on the buds
Was wont to swell like round and orient pearls,
Stood now within the pretty flowerets' eyes
Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail.
When I had at my pleasure taunted her,
And she in mild terms begg'd my patience,
I then did ask of her her changeling child;
Which straight she gave me, and her fairy sent
To bear him to my bower in fairyland.
And now I have the boy, I will undo
This hateful imperfection of her eyes:
And, gentle Puck, take this transformed scalp
From off the head of this Athenian swain;
That, he awaking when the other do,
May all to Athens back again repair,
And think no more of this night's accidents
But as the fierce vexation of a dream.
But first I will release the fairy queen.

Be as thou wast wont to be;
See as thou wast wont to see:

Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower
Hath such force and blessed power.

Now, my Titania ; wake you, my sweet queen.

Titania. My Oberon ! what visions have I seen !
Methought I was enamor'd of an ass.

Oberon. There lies your love.

Titania. How came these things to pass ?
O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now !

Oberon. Silence awhile. — Robin, take off this head. —
Titania, music call ; and strike more dead
Than common sleep of all these five¹ the sense.

Titania. Music, ho ! music, such as charmeth sleep !

[*Music, still.*

Puck. Now, when thou wak'st, with thine own fool's eyes peep.

Oberon. Sound, music ! — Come, my queen, take hands with
me,

And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.

Now thou and I are new in amity,

And will to-morrow midnight solemnly

Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly,

And bless it to all fair posterity.

There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be

Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.

Puck. Fairy king, attend, and mark :
I do hear the morning lark.

Oberon. Then, my queen, in silence sad,²
Trip we after the night's shade :
We the globe can compass soon,
Swifter than the wand'ring moon.

Titania. Come, my lord, and in our flight
Tell me how it came this night
That I sleeping here was found
With these mortals on the ground.

[*Exeunt.*

[*Horns winded within.*

¹ The five Athenians, Hermia, Helena, Bottom, etc.

² Grave.

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, and train.

Theseus. Go, one of you, find out the forester ;
For now our observation¹ is perform'd ;
And since we have the vaward² of the day,
My love shall hear the music of my hounds.
Uncouple³ in the western valley ; let them go :
Dispatch, I say, and find the forester. — [*Exit an Attendant.*]
We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top,
And mark the musical confusion
Of hounds and echo in conjunction.

Hippolyta. I was with Hercules and Cadmus⁴ once,
When in a wood of Crete they bay'd⁵ the bear
With hounds of Sparta : never did I hear
Such gallant chiding ; for, besides the groves,
The skies, the fountains, every region near
Seem'd all one mutual cry. I never heard
So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

Theseus. My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,
So flew'd,⁶ so sanded,⁷ and their heads are hung
With ears that sweep away the morning dew ;
Crook-knee'd, and dew-lapp'd like Thessalian bulls ;
Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,
Each under each. A cry more tunable
Was never holla'd to, nor cheer'd with horn,
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly :
Judge when you hear. — But, soft ! what nymphs are these ?

¹ Observance of May Day custom.

² Vanward, or forepart.

³ Unchain ; slip the leash.

⁴ Hercules and Cadmus are mythical heroes of antiquity. The most remarkable achievements of the former are known as the Twelve Labors of Hercules. The latter is credited with inventing, or introducing into Greece, the letters of the alphabet.

⁵ Hunted ; chased.

⁶ Flews are the overhanging chops of a hound.

⁷ Of a sandy color.

Egeus. My lord, this is my daughter here asleep ;
And this, Lysander ; this Demetrius is ;
This Helena, old Nedar's Helena :
I wonder of their being here together.

Theseus. No doubt they rose up early to observe
The rite of May,¹ and, hearing our intent,
Came here in grace of our solemnity. —
But speak, Egeus ; is not this the day
That Hermia should give answer of her choice ?

Egeus. It is, my lord.

Theseus. Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns.

[*Horns and shout within. Lysander, Demetrius,
Helena, and Hermia, wake and start up.*]

Good-morrow, friends. Saint Valentine² is past :
Begin these wood birds but to couple now ?

Lysander. Pardon, my lord.

Theseus. I pray you all, stand up.

I know you two are rival enemies :
How comes this gentle concord in the world,
That hatred is so far from jealousy,
To sleep by hate, and fear no enmity ?

Lysander. My lord, I shall reply amazedly,
Half sleep, half waking : but as yet, I swear,
I cannot truly say how I came here ;
But, as I think, — for truly would I speak,
And now I do bethink me, so it is, —
I came with Hermia hither : our intent
Was to be gone from Athens, where we might,
Without the peril of th' Athenian law —

Egeus. Enough, enough, my lord ; you have enough :
I beg the law, the law, upon his head.

¹ May Day.

² St. Valentine's day, when birds were supposed to choose their mates for the season.

They would have stolen away ; they would, Demetrius,
Thereby to have defeated you and me,
You of your wife and me of my consent,
Of my consent that she should be your wife.

Demetrius. My lord, fair Helen told me of their stealth,
Of this their purpose hither to this wood ;
And I in fury hither follow'd them,
Fair Helena in fancy¹ following me.
But, my good lord, I wot not by what power, —
But by some power it is, — my love to Hermia,
Melted as doth the snow, seems to me now
As the remembrance of an idle gawd²
Which in my childhood I did dote upon ;
And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,
The object and the pleasure of mine eye,
Is only Helena. To her, my lord,
Was I betroth'd ere I saw Hermia :
But, like in sickness, did I loathe this food ;
But, as in health, come to my natural taste,
Now I do wish it, love it, long for it,
And will for evermore be true to it.

Theseus. Fair lovers, you are fortunately met :
Of this discourse we shall hear more anon. —
Egeus, I will overbear your will ;
For in the temple, by and by, with us,
These couples shall eternally be knit :
And, for the morning now is something worn,
Our purpos'd hunting shall be set aside.
Away with us to Athens ; three and three,
We'll hold a feast in great solemnity. —
Come, Hippolyta.

[*Exeunt Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus, and train.*]

Demetrius. These things seem small and undistinguishable,
Like far-off mountains turned into clouds.

¹ " In fancy," i.e., impelled by love.

² Bauble.

Hermia. Methinks I see these things with parted eye,
When everything seems double.

Helena. So methinks :
And I have found Demetrius, like a jewel,
Mine own, and not mine own.¹

Demetrius. It seems to me
That yet we sleep, we dream. Do not you think
The duke was here, and bid us follow him?

Hermia. Yea ; and my father.

Helena. And Hippolyta.

Lysander. And he did bid us follow to the temple.

Demetrius. Why, then, we are awake : let's follow him ;
And by the way let us recount our dreams. [Exeunt.

Bottom. [Awaking] When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer : my next is, "Most fair Pyramus."—Heigh-ho!—Peter Quince! Flute, the bellows mender! Snout, the tinker! Starveling! God's my life,² stolen hence, and left me asleep! I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was : man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was,—and methought I had,—but man is but a patched fool,³ if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream : it shall be called Bottom's Dream, because it hath no bottom ; and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the duke : peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it at her death.⁴ [Exit.

¹ "And I have found," etc., i.e., and by this double vision I seem to find my precious Demetrius to be my own and yet not my own.

² A petty oath, a contraction of "as God is my life."

³ "Patched fool," i.e., motley fool, referring to the party-colored or patched dress of the professional fool.

⁴ Bottom means he will sing his dream to divert attention from Thisbe's death.

SCENE II. *Athens. Quince's House.**Enter QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING.*

Quince. Have you sent to Bottom's house? is he come home yet?

Starveling. He cannot be heard of. Out of doubt he is transported.¹

Flute. If he come not, then the play is marred: it goes not forward, doth it?

Quince. It is not possible: you have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus but he.

Flute. No, he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens.

Quince. Yea, and the best person too; and he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.

Flute. You must say "paragon:" a paramour is, God bless us, a thing of naught.

Enter SNUG.

Snug. Masters, the duke is coming from the temple, and there is two or three lords and ladies more married. If our sport had gone forward, we had all been made men.

Flute. O, sweet bully Bottom! Thus hath he lost sixpence a day during his life; he could not have 'scaped sixpence a day: an the duke had not given him sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I'll be hanged; he would have deserved it: sixpence a day in Pyramus, or nothing.

Enter BOTTOM.

Bottom. Where are these lads? where are these hearts?

Quince. Bottom!—O most courageous² day! O most happy hour!

¹ Transformed.

² Perhaps Quince means "courteous," i.e., kind; the sense, of course, is "lucky."

Bottom. Masters, I am to discourse wonders: but ask me not what; for if I tell you, I am no true Athenian. I will tell you everything, right as it fell out.

Quince. Let us hear, sweet Bottom.

Bottom. Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is, that the duke hath dined. Get your apparel together, good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps; meet presently at the palace; every man look o'er his part; for the short and the long is, our play is preferred. In any case, let Thisby have clean linen; and let not him that plays the lion pare his nails, for they shall hang out for the lion's claws. And, most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath; and I do not doubt but to hear them say, it is a sweet comedy. No more words: away! go, away! [*Exeunt.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I. *Athens. The Palace of Theseus.*

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, Lords, and Attendants.

Hippolyta. 'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.

Theseus. More strange than true: I never may believe
These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.¹
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are of imagination all compact:²
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold;
That is, the madman: the lover, all as frantic,
Sees Helen's³ beauty in a brow of Egypt:

¹ Silly tales.

² Composed.

³ The Spartan Helen, the most beautiful woman of her time, wife of Menelaus, King of Sparta. Her abduction by Paris, Prince of Troy, brought about the Trojan War, the theme of Homer's *Iliad*.

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
 Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
 And as imagination bodies forth
 The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
 Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
 A local habitation and a name.
 Such tricks hath strong imagination,
 That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
 It comprehends some bringer of that joy;
 Or in the night, imagining some fear,
 How easy is a bush suppos'd a bear!

Hippolyta. But all the story of the night told over,
 And all their minds transfigur'd so together,
 More witnesseth than fancy's images,
 And grows to something of great constancy,¹
 But, howsoever,² strange and admirable.

Theseus. Here come the lovers, full of joy and mirth.

Enter LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HERMIA, *and* HELENA.

Joy, gentle friends! joy and fresh days of love
 Accompany your hearts!

Lysander. More than to us
 Wait in your royal walks, your board, your bed!

Theseus. Come now; what masques, what dances shall we
 have,
 To wear away this long age of three hours
 Between our after-supper and bedtime?
 Where is our usual manager of mirth?
 What revels are in hand? Is there no play,
 To ease the anguish of a torturing hour?
 Call Philostrate.

Philostrate. Here, mighty Theseus.

Theseus. Say, what abridgment³ have you for this evening?

¹ Consistency.

² In any case.

³ Pastime.

What masque ? what music ? How shall we beguile
The lazy time, if not with some delight ?

Philostrate. There is a brief¹ how many sports are ripe :
Make choice of which your highness will see first.

[*Giving a paper.*]

Theseus. [*Reads*] "*The battle with the Centaurs,*² *to be sung*
By an Athenian eunuch to the harp."

We'll none of that : that have I told my love,
In glory of my kinsman Hercules.

[*Reads*] "*The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,*
*Tearing the Thracian singer*³ *in their rage.*"

That is an old device ; and it was play'd
When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.

[*Reads*] "*The thrice three Muses mourning for the death*
Of Learning, late deceas'd in beggary."

That is some satire, keen and critical,
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.

[*Reads*] "*A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus*
And his love Thisbe ; very tragical mirth."

Merry and tragical ! Tedious and brief !

¹ List.

² The centaur was a mythical monster having the body and legs of a horse, with human head and arms. Theseus visited the court of Adrastus, king of Argos, to witness the marriage of his friend Pirithous, prince of the Lapithæ, with the daughter of that king. Among other guests were Hercules and a number of centaurs. The latter, struck with the bride's beauty, attempted to kidnap her, but were repulsed by the Lapithæ, aided by Theseus and Hercules.

³ Orpheus : who, as the story runs, was the son of Apollo and Calliope, whose musical gifts he inherited. On the death of his wife, Eurydice, heart-broken and disconsolate, Orpheus retired to the solitudes of a forest, where he was one day overtaken by a band of gay Bacchantes (devotees of Bacchus) and bade to play a lively tune that they might dance ; but, dazed with grief, he could not comply with their demands ; and " the tipsy Bacchanals," " enraged at the sad notes which alone he could now draw from his instrument, tore him limb from limb, and cast his mangled remains into the Hebrus River." (See Guerber's *Myths of Greece and Rome.*)

That is, hot ice and wondrous strange snow.
How shall we find the concord of this discord?

Philostrate. A play there is, my lord, some ten words long,
Which is as brief as I have known a play;
But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,
Which makes it tedious; for in all the play
There is not one word apt, one player fitted.
And tragical, my noble lord, it is;
For Pyramus therein doth kill himself:
Which, when I saw rehears'd, I must confess,
Made mine eyes water; but more merry tears
The passion of loud laughter never shed.

Theseus. What are they that do play it?

Philostrate. Hard-handed men that work in Athens here,
Which never labor'd in their minds till now;
And now have toil'd their unbreath'd¹ memories
With this same play, against your nuptial.

Theseus. And we will hear it.

Philostrate. No, my noble lord;
It is not for you: I have heard it over,
And it is nothing, nothing in the world,
Unless you can find sport in their intents,
Extremely stretch'd and conn'd with cruel pain,
To do you service.

Theseus. I will hear that play;
For never anything can be amiss,
When simpleness and duty tender it.
Go, bring them in:—and take your places, ladies.

[*Exit Philostrate.*]

Hippolyta. I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharg'd
And duty in his² service perishing.

Theseus. Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing.

Hippolyta. He says they can do nothing in this kind.

¹ Unpracticed.

² Its.

Theseus. The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.
Our sport shall be to take what they mistake:
And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect¹
Takes it in might, not merit.²
Where I have come, great clerks³ have purposed
To greet me with premeditated welcomes;
Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,
Make periods in the midst of sentences,
Throttle⁴ their practis'd accent in their fears,
And in conclusion dumbly have broke off,
Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,
Out of this silence yet I pick'd a welcome;
And in the modesty of fearful duty
I read as much as from the rattling tongue
Of saucy and audacious eloquence.
Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity
In least speak most, to my capacity.⁵

Reënter PHILOSTRATE.

Philostrate. So please your grace, the Prologue is address'd.⁶
Theseus. Let him approach. [*Flourish of trumpets.*]

Enter QUINCE as the Prologue.

Prologue. "If we offend, it is with our good will.
That you should think, we come not to offend,
But with good will. To show our simple skill,
That is the true beginning of our end.
Consider then we come but in despite.
We do not come as minding to content you,
Our true intent is. All for your delight

¹ Consideration.

² "Takes it in," etc., i.e., judges by the intention rather than by the merit of the actual performance.

³ Learned men.

⁴ Choke in the utterance.

⁵ Judgment.

⁶ Ready.

We are not here. That you should here repent you,
The actors are at hand, and by their show
You shall know all that you are like to know."

Theseus. This fellow doth not stand upon points.

Lysander. He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt; he knows not the stop. A good moral, my lord: it is not enough to speak, but to speak true.

Hippolyta. Indeed he hath play'd on his prologue like a child on a recorder;¹ a sound, but not in government.

Theseus. His speech was like a tangled chain; nothing impaired, but all disordered. Who is next?

Enter PYRAMUS and THISBE, WALL, MOONSHINE, and LION.

Prologue. "Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show;
But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.

This man is Pyramus, if you would know;

This beauteous lady Thisby is certain'.

This man, with lime and roughcast, doth present

Wall, that vile wall which did these lovers sunder;

And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content

To whisper; at the which let no man wonder.

This man, with lanthorn, dog, and bush of thorn,

Presenteth Moonshine; for, if you will know,

By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn

To meet at Ninus' tomb, there, there to woo.

This grisly beast, which Lion hight² by name,

The trusty Thisby, coming first by night,

Did scare away, or rather did affright;

And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall,

Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.

Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,

And finds his trusty Thisby's mantle slain:

Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,

¹ A musical instrument resembling the flageolet.

² Called.

He bravely broach'd his boiling bloody breast;
And Thisby tarrying in mulberry shade,
His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,
Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain,
At large discourse, while here they do remain."

[*Exeunt Prologue, Pyramus, Thisbe, Lion, and Moonshine.*

Theseus. I wonder if the lion be to speak.

Demetrius. No wonder, my lord: one lion may, when many asses do.

Wall. "In this same interlude it doth befall
That I, one Snout by name, present a wall;
And such a wall, as I would have you think,
That had in it a crannied hole or chink,
Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisby,
Did whisper often very secretly.
This loam, this roughcast, and this stone, doth show
That I am that same wall; the truth is so:
And this the cranny is, right and sinister,¹
Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper."

Theseus. Would you desire lime and hair to speak better?

Demetrius. It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard discourse, my lord.

Reënter PYRAMUS.

Theseus. Pyramus draws near the wall: silence!

Pyramus. "O grim-look'd night! O night with hue so black!
O night, which ever art when day is not!
O night, O night! alack, alack, alack,
I fear my Thisby's promise is forgot!—
And thou, O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall,
That stand'st between her father's ground and mine!
Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,
Show me thy chink, to blink through with mine eyne!

[*Wall holds up his fingers.*

¹ Left.

Thanks, courteous wall: Jove shield thee well for this!

But what see I? No Thisby do I see.

O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss!

Curst be thy stones for thus deceiving me!"

Theseus. The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse again.

Pyramus. No, in truth, sir, he should not. "Deceiving me" is Thisby's cue: she is to enter now, and I am to spy her through the wall. You shall see, it will fall pat as I told you. Yonder she comes.

Reënter THISBE.

Thisbe. "O wall, full often hast thou heard my moans,
For parting my fair Pyramus and me!

My cherry lips have often kiss'd thy stones,
Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee."

Pyramus. "I see a voice: now will I to the chink,
To spy an I can hear my Thisby's face.

Thisby!"

Thisbe. "My love! thou art my love, I think."

Pyramus. "Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover's grace;¹
And, like Limander,² am I trusty still."

Thisbe. "And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill."

Pyramus. "Not Shafalus to Procrus³ was so true."

¹ "Lover's grace," i.e., graceful lover.

² Limander is a blunder for Leander, as Helen is for Hero, a beautiful maiden of Sestos enamored of Leander of Abydos. He nightly swam the Hellespont to meet her, she guiding his course by waving a torch on a high tower; but one stormy night the fearless lover was drowned, and Hero in despair threw herself from the tower and perished in the sea.

³ Bottom would say Cephalus and Procris. Cephalus, a mythical prince of Thessaly, was beloved of Aurora, but he preferred and married Procris, a lady of Athens. Piqued by this, the goddess, to excite the jealousy of his wife, told her that Cephalus was loved of a nymph whom he met in the forest. Procris concealed herself in the wood near a favorite resort of her husband, who, coming to the spot in the heat of the day, murmured "*aura*" ("refreshing breeze"). Procris, supposing him to be addressing her rival, in order to

Thisbe. "As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you."

Pyramus. "O, kiss me through the hole of this vile wall!"

Thisbe. "I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all."

Pyramus. "Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway?"

Thisbe. "'Tide¹ life, 'tide death, I come without delay."

[*Exeunt Pyramus and Thisbe.*]

Wall. "Thus have I, Wall, my part discharged so;
And, being done, thus Wall away doth go." [Exit.

Theseus. Now is the mural² down between the two neighbors.

Demetrius. No remedy, my lord, when walls are so willful to hear without warning.

Hippolyta. This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

Theseus. The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.

Hippolyta. It must be your imagination then, and not theirs.

Theseus. If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men. Here come two noble beasts in, a man and a lion.

Reënter LION and MOONSHINE.

Lion. "You, ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear
The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,
May now perchance both quake and tremble here,
When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.
Then know that I, one Snug the joiner, am
A lion fell, nor else no lion's dam;³
For, if I should as lion come in strife
Into this place, 'twere pity on my life."

Theseus. A very gentle beast, and of a good conscience.

get sight of her made a movement that Cephalus noticed, and thinking some wild beast was lurking in the thicket, he cast a javelin into its midst, which pierced the bosom of his wife with a mortal wound.

¹ Betide; happen. ² Wall.

³ "Then know," etc., i.e., then know that I am neither a lion nor a lioness, but one Snug the joiner, in a lion's skin.

Demetrius. The very best at a beast, my lord, that e'er I saw.

Lysander. This lion is a very fox for his valor.

Theseus. True; and a goose for his discretion.

Demetrius. Not so, my lord; for his valor cannot carry his discretion; and the fox carries the goose.

Theseus. His discretion, I am sure, cannot carry his valor; for the goose carries not the fox. It is well: leave it to his discretion, and let us listen to the moon.

Moonshine. "This lanthorn doth the horned moon present;" —

Demetrius. He should have worn the horns on his head.

Theseus. He is no crescent, and his horns are invisible within the circumference.

Moonshine. "This lanthorn doth the horned moon present; Myself the man i' the moon do seem to be."

Theseus. This is the greatest error of all the rest: the man should be put into the lanthorn. How is it else the man i' the moon?

Demetrius. He dares not come there for the candle; for, you see, it is already in snuff.¹

Hippolyta. I am awearry of this moon: would he would change!

Theseus. It appears, by his small light of discretion, that he is in the wane; but yet, in courtesy, in all reason, we must stay the time.

Lysander. Proceed, Moon.

Moonshine. "All that I have to say is to tell you that the lanthorn is the moon; I, the man in the moon; this thorn bush, my thorn bush; and this dog, my dog."

Demetrius. Why, all these should be in the lanthorn; for they are in the moon. But silence! here comes Thisbe.

Reënter THISBE.

Thisbe. "This is old Ninny's tomb. Where is my love?"

Lion. [*Roaring*] "Oh" — [*Thisbe runs off.*]

¹ Demetrius quibbles on the two meanings of this word: "To take offense," and "the burnt wick of a candle."

Demetrius. Well roared, Lion.

Theseus. Well run, Thisbe.

Hippolyta. Well shone, Moon.— Truly, the moon shines with a good grace. [*The Lion shakes Thisbe's mantle, and exit.*]

Theseus. Well moused,¹ Lion.

Demetrius. And then came Pyramus.

Lysander. And so the lion vanished.

Reënter PYRAMUS.

Pyramus. “Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams;
I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright;
For, by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams,
I trust to take of truest Thisby sight.—

But stay, O spite!

But mark, poor knight,

What dreadful dole is here!

Eyes, do you see?

How can it be?

O dainty duck! O dear!

Thy mantle good,

What, stain'd with blood!

Approach, ye Furies fell!

O Fates, come, come,

Cut thread and thrum;²

Quail, crush, conclude, and quell!”³

Theseus. This passion,⁴ and the death of a dear friend, would go near to make a man look sad.

Hippolyta. Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man.

Pyramus. “O wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame?
Since lion vile hath here deflower'd my dear:

¹ Torn in pieces.

² Thrums are the tufts at the ends of weavers' threads when woven.

³ Kill.

⁴ This word is used by Shakespeare to denote any strong emotion.

Which is — no, no — which was the fairest dame
That liv'd, that lov'd, that lik'd, that look'd with cheer.

Come; tears, confound;
Out, sword, and wound
The pap of Pyramus;
Ay, that left pap,
Where heart doth hop: [Stabs himself.
Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.
Now am I dead,
Now am I fled;
My soul is in the sky:
Tongue, lose thy light;
Moon, take thy flight: [Exit Moonshine.
Now die, die, die, die, die." [Dies.

Demetrius. No die, but an ace, for him; for he is but one.

Lysander. Less than ace, man; for he is dead; he is nothing.

Theseus. With the help of a surgeon he might yet recover, and prove an ass.

Hippolyta. How chance Moonshine is gone before Thisbe comes back and finds her lover?

Theseus. She will find him by starlight. Here she comes; and her passion ends the play.

Reënter THISBE.

Hippolyta. Methinks she should not use a long one for such a Pyramus: I hope she will be brief.

Demetrius. A mote will turn the balance, which Pyramus, which Thisbe, is the better; he for a man, God warrant us; she for a woman, God bless us.

Lysander. She hath spied him already with those sweet eyes.

Demetrius. And thus she moans, videlicet: ¹—

Thisbe. "Asleep, my love?
What, dead, my dove?"

¹ Ordinarily used in its contracted form of *viz.* ("namely").

O Pyramus, arise!
Speak, speak. Quite dumb?
Dead, dead? A tomb
Must cover thy sweet eyes.
These lily lips,
This cherry nose,
These yellow cowslip cheeks,
Are gone, are gone.
Lovers, make moan!
His eyes were green as leeks.
O Sisters Three,¹
Come, come to me,
With hands as pale as milk;
Lay them in gore,
Since you have shore²
With shears his thread of silk.
Tongue, not a word:
Come, trusty sword;
Come, blade, my breast imbrue: [*Stabs herself.*
And, farewell, friends;
Thus Thisby ends:
Adieu, adieu, adieu.” [*Dies.*

Theseus. Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

Demetrius. Ay, and Wall too.

Bottom. [*Starting up*] No, I assure you; the wall is down that parted their fathers. Will it please you to see the epilogue, or to hear a Bergomask dance³ between two of our company?

Theseus. No epilogue, I pray you; for your play needs no

¹ The three Fates of ancient mythology who controlled the birth and life of mankind. Clotho, the youngest, presided over the moment of birth, and held a distaff in her hand; Lachesis spun out all the events and actions of life; and Atropos, the eldest, cut the thread of human life with a pair of shears.

² Shorn.

³ A burlesque dance, having its name from Bergamo, in Italy.

excuse. Never excuse; for when the players are all dead, there need none to be blamed. Marry, if he that writ it had played Pyramus and hanged himself in Thisbe's garter, it would have been a fine tragedy: and so it is, truly; and very notably discharged. But, come, your Bergomask: let your epilogue alone.

[*A dance.*

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve:

Lovers, to bed; 'tis almost fairy time.

I fear we shall outsleep the coming morn

As much as we this night have overwatch'd.

This palpable-gross play hath well beguil'd

The heavy gait of night. Sweet friends, to bed.

A fortnight hold we this solemnity,

In nightly revels and new jollity.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter PUCK.

Puck. Now the hungry lion roars,

And the wolf behowls the moon;

Whilst the heavy plowman snores,

All with weary task fordone.¹

Now the wasted brands do glow,

Whilst the screech owl, screeching loud,

Puts the wretch that lies in woe

In remembrance of a shroud.

Now it is the time of night

That the graves, all gaping wide,

Every one lets forth his sprite,

In the church-way paths to glide:

And we fairies, that do run

By the triple Hecate's² team,

¹ Exhausted.

² Hecate was known as Luna in heaven, Diana on earth, and Hecate or Proserpina in the lower regions, and was supposed to preside over magic and enchantments. She is generally represented as a woman with three heads. The word has two syllables here.

From the presence of the sun,
Following darkness like a dream,
Now are frolic ; not a mouse
Shall disturb this hallow'd house :
I am sent with broom before,
To sweep the dust behind the door.

Enter OBERON and TITANIA, with their train.

Oberon. Through the house give glimmering light,
By the dead and drowsy fire ;
Every elf and fairy sprite
Hop as light as bird from brier ;
And this ditty, after me
Sing, and dance it trippingly.

Titania. First, rehearse your song by rote,
To each word a warbling note :
Hand in hand, with fairy grace,
Will we sing, and bless this place. [*Song and dance.*]

Oberon. Now, until the break of day,
Through this house each fairy stray.
To the best bridebed will we ;
Which by us shall blessed be.
So shall all the couples three
Ever true in loving be ;
And the blots of Nature's hand
Shall not in their issue stand ;
Never mole, harelip, nor scar,
Nor mark prodigious,¹ such as are
Despised in nativity,
Shall upon their children be.
With this field-dew consecrate,
Every fairy take his gait ;²
And each several chamber bless,

¹ Portentous.

² Course or way.

Through this palace, with sweet peace ;
And the owner of it blest,
Ever shall in safety rest.
Trip away ; make no stay ;
Meet me all by break of day.

[*Exeunt Oberon, Titania, and train.*]

Puck. If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumber'd here
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend :¹
If you pardon, we will mend.
And, as I'm an honest Puck,
If we have unearned luck
Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,
We will make amends ere long ;
Else the Puck a liar call :
So, good-night unto you all.
Give me your hands, if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends.

[*Exit.*]

¹ Blame.

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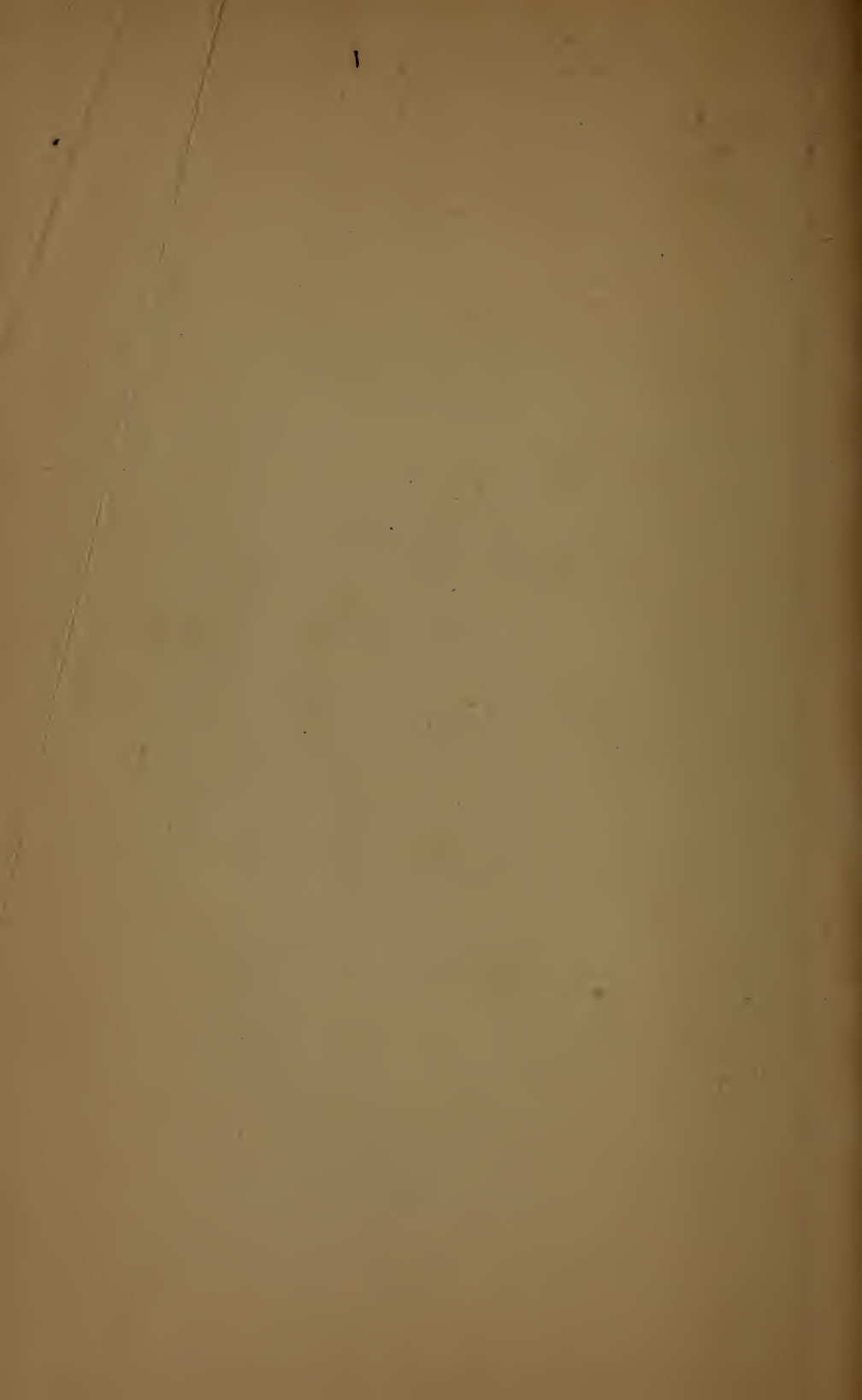
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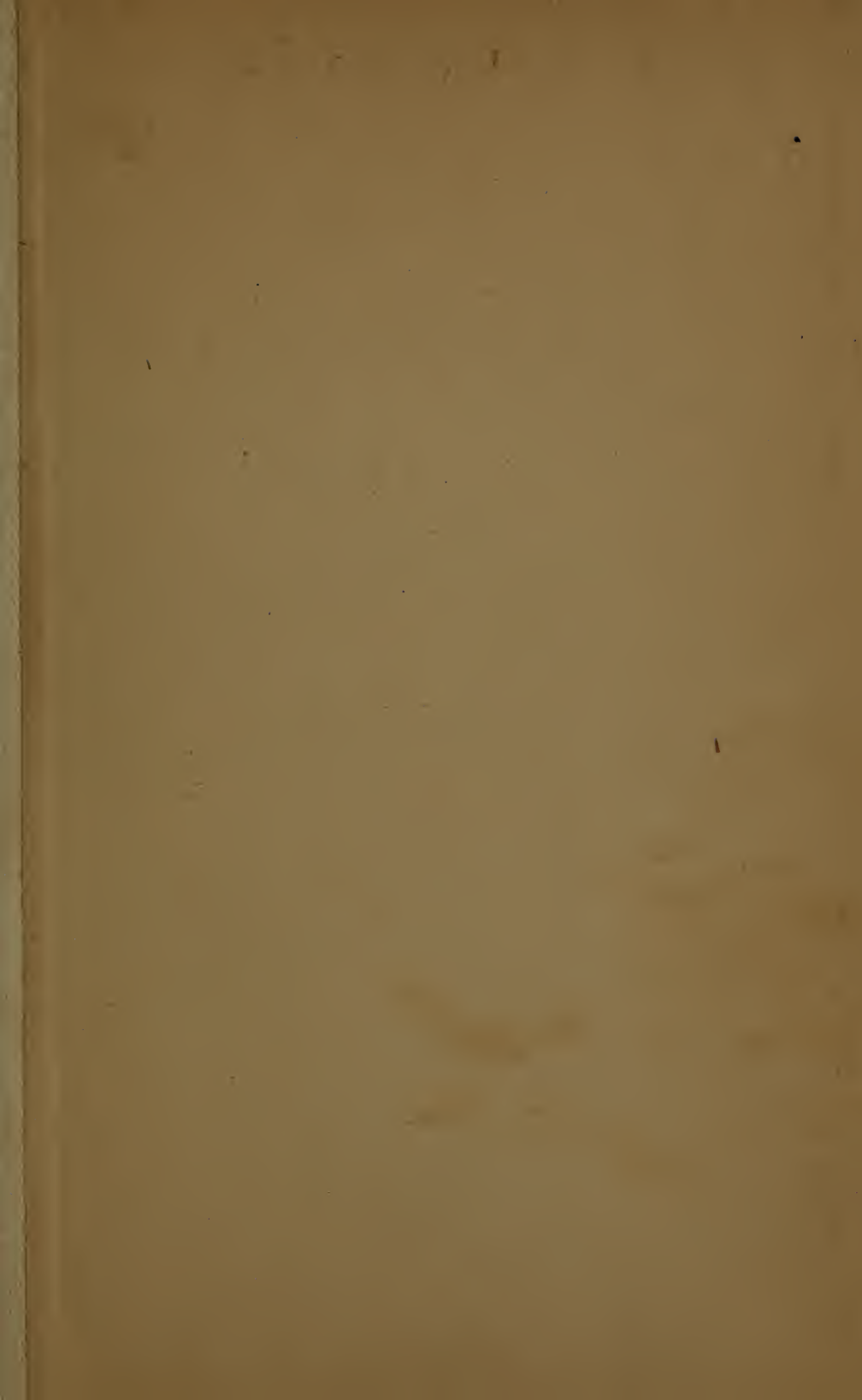
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